

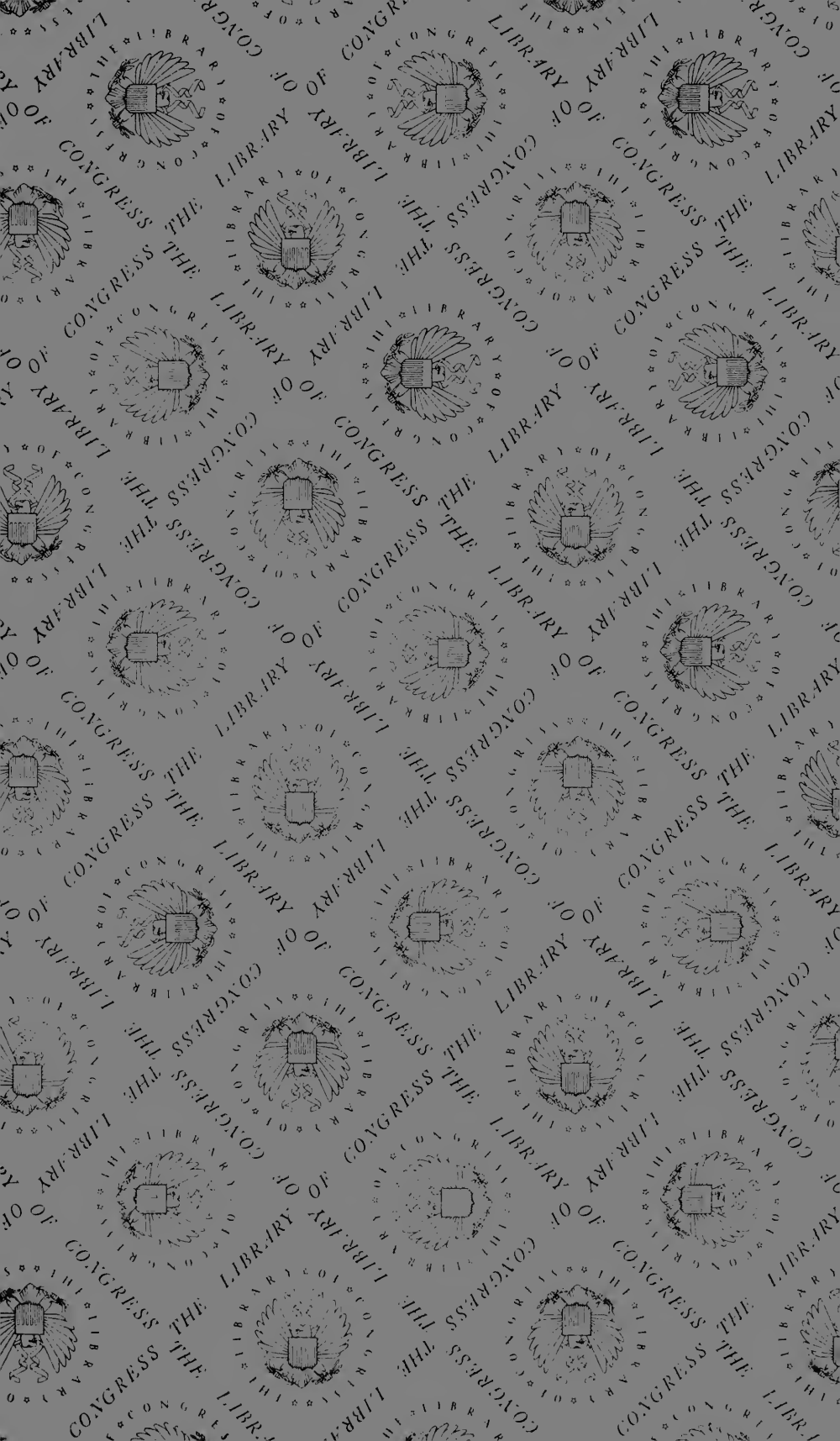
PS

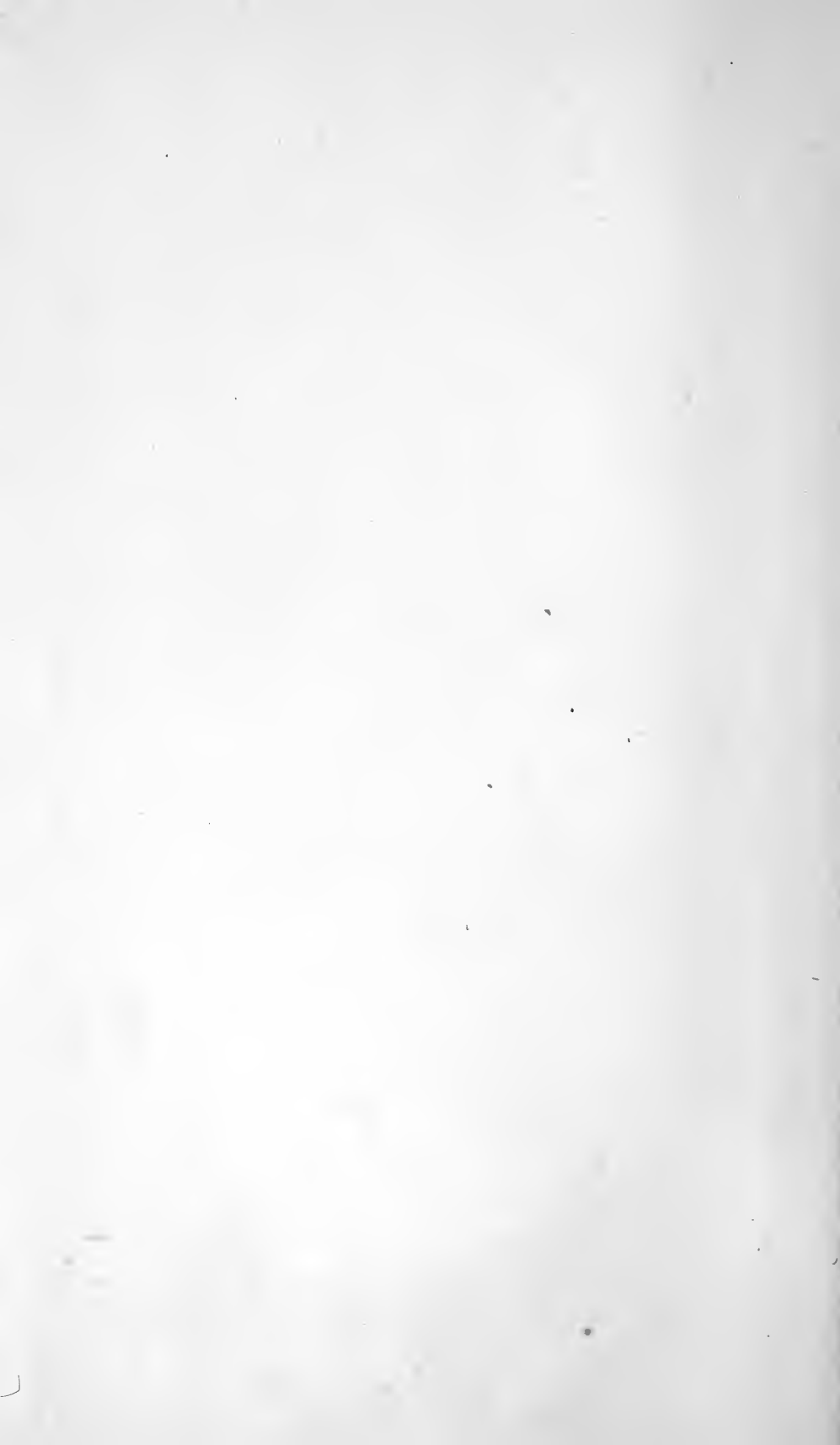
1068

B4A7

1889









THE AMARANTH AND THE BERYL



In Memoriam

MY BROTHER

COPYRIGHT BY
WILLARD FRACKER & COMPANY

1889

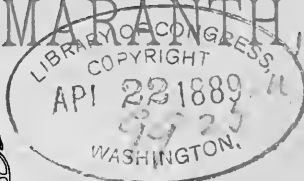
There's a voice that wakes for me
Thoughts so mortal to my tongue,
That my heart but silently
Bows, and leaves the song unsung.

There's a precept dropt from heaven
To my pillow, and 't is mine
Not for spoken truth, but dearer,
All unspoken 'neath the line.



HE

AMARANTH



AND +

+ THE



ERYL +

AN ELEGY

By ✓

Charles Edward Barns

AUTHOR OF SOLITARIUS TO HIS DÆMON, ETC.

1889

WILLARD FRACKER & COMPANY,

NEW YORK

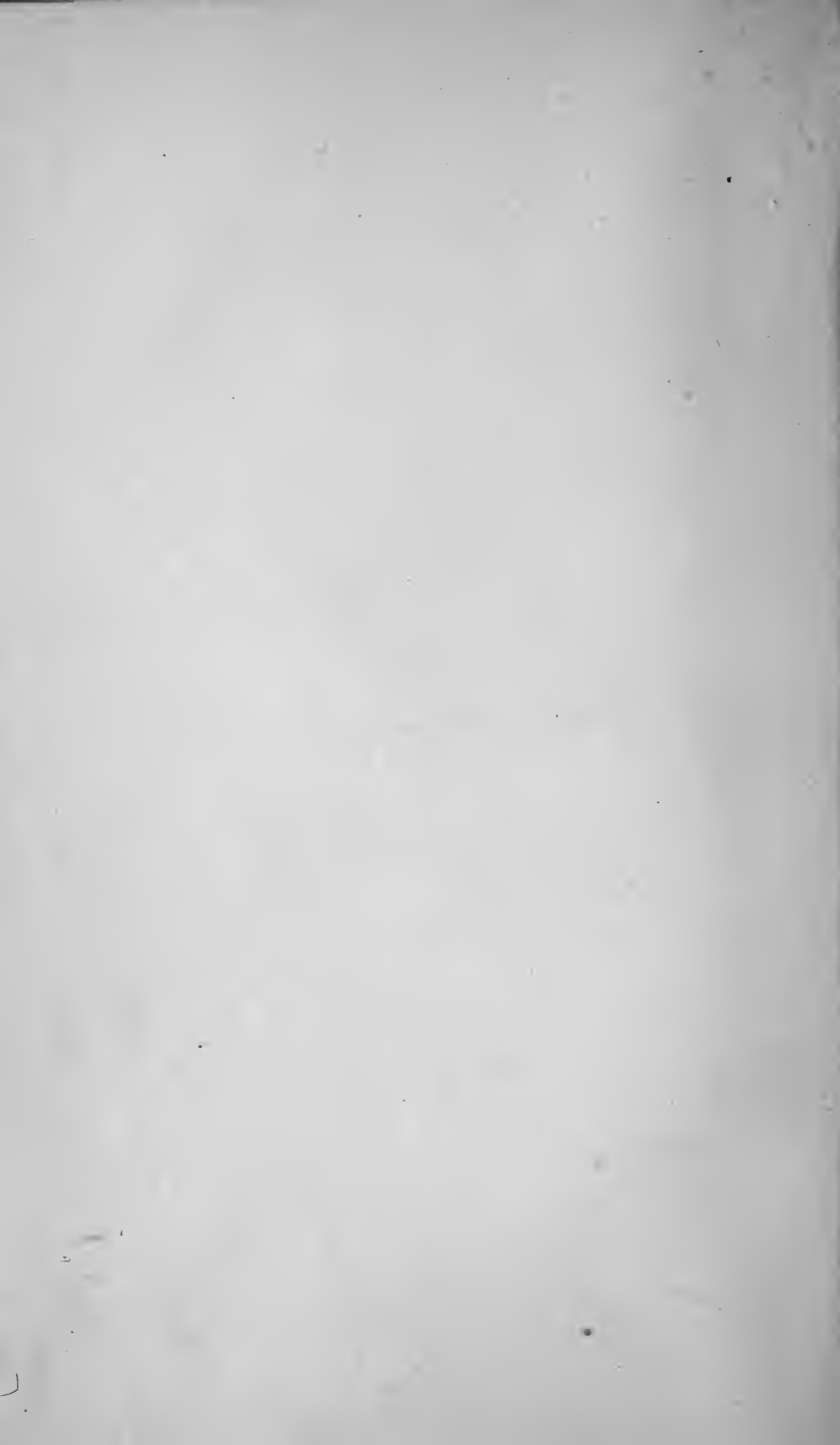
PS 1068

B4A7

1889

CONTENTS.

THE AMARANTH AND THE BERYL	15
MINABEL	45
THE TRUTH-GOD	89
UNTITLED LYRICS AND SONNETS	171
ZOROASTER	211



The Amaranth and the Beryl

Inland Sea of Japan.—1883.



The Amaranth and the Beryl:

AN ELEGY.

I.

Another star swoons on the horizon—
A glory nevermore ! Oh weep with me ;
For if a brother's love thy life hath known,
Be thou a bead of my heart's rosary
O'er which I bend and pray. Let us condole,
Waking from death a tribute pure and free :
One co-eternal hymn. And thou, my soul—
Grief-nurtured orphan of fatality—
Arise and kiss this dust to heaven, and toll
Thy silver psalmody, bidding it Godward roll.

II.

Ah, Death now lives, and Joy in us is dead ;
The leprous cross sweeps that marmoreal
brow,
And Memory drooping bows her anguished
head

Upon that bosom one with Nature now.
O realmless Parent ! here thy son lays down
This staff called 'Life,' we know not why,
nor how,
Nor whence it came, nor whether it be crown
Or cross ; but here it lies—shattered ! and
thou
Pale Earth, still kneeling in thy druid gown,
These precious vigils keep, lighting his dear
renown !

III.

His heart throbbed in the bosom of a cloud
That rained sweet health o'er Nature's
parchèd tongue ;
Yet to be man to man was he as proud
As to be hero for their weal. That young
And soldierly discretion loved the deed
For the deed's holy doing, whether wrung
From bitterness or joy. He found a creed
In the great heart of man—a hymn unsung,
A scripture wordless, yet of speech indeed
Profound and godlike both in triumph and in
need.

IV.

And he is ours to joy beside no more ;
Oh prostrate season when our Summer fled :
That warrior will is beckoned to the shore
To join the Truth-gods' council of the dead.

A star pavilion o'er his chariot falls,
The nightly galaxies before him led ;
The noisesome yokes of mortal travail calls
In the dim wakes of Love long vanquishèd,
While Saturn-like on through these widowed
halls,
Sorrow plods forth, masking the Hours in
funeral palls.

v.

All that was Beauty-born of earth or skies,
All goodness though the lowly and unsought,
All that was feeling to his thankful eyes
His gospel was ; for fashioning to thought
This fair God-quality, there moved in him
A power that rose to life that men be brought
To honor truer truth ; and through the dim
Estangement of our mortal means, be taught
The creed of charity ; then at the rim
Of death he drank of life with godhood at the
brim.

vi.

Love writes with her own tears his epitaph
Upon the forehead of a lifting fame
Too holy not to prove of heaven half—
To pure not to give purity a name
More true than language, which these zones
of toil
Still as a watchword to their empires claim.

From her bowed heart Affection pours the oil
Into the censer's lips, and with the flame
Of plumèd suns 't is lit, and coil on coil
The smokes pray Godward up, up from this
seat of spoil.

VII.

A single meteor was at his side
Pathing his course through heaven! Aye,
from the sun
Of druid Even to the early bride
Of young Morn's minister his race was run
Like some grave seer; and at his touch of light
In a melodious splendor there was won
From grief a gospel to this eremite
Of Love's large discourse. Lo! Oblivion
Bearded, and by this child who snatched from
Night
Her sceptre, and from Death a tribute pure
and bright.

VIII.

The forest and the glen-nursed mountain
streams
Encircling this ambrosial couch of thought :
The night-lorn caverns where the hermit
dreams,
The bastioned vales where solitude is sought :
These are the keeps unchallenged of the blade,
The courts of eld where sylvan gods have
wrought

Huge images, and where he found them laid.
And here he lived and loved ; and here was
taught
The dignity of manhood, and was made
One with the oracle that cannot pale nor fade.

IX.

The trancèd chalice lies ravished of wine—
That morning vintage of Arcadian vales ;
And there Love lifts her chaplet most divine,
And Music rears her wild young nightingales.
Upon the magic of that Titan morn
He came, as some sky-pilgrim that regales
The crouching earth, unteaching it of scorn,
Touching the pulse of Truth till it exhales
A balm to ease mankind ; while error-torn
And bruised Hope up, up from her dead self
is borne.

X.

Mute are the praying streams that kisssd his
feet,—
The air hangs pond'rous with some vital awe ;
Sad Nature listens to her own heart's beat,
While round this fane the ruth-browed ves-
tals draw.
Oh say 't is not unworthy them to throng ;
But weep with them, and let thy hot tears
thaw

This icy chain binding Love to her wrong
In this o'er-earnest grief that seems to gnaw
Deep to the heart of heaven, turning its strong
And staid magnificence to vigils of sweet song.

XI.

Youth leers at Death, smiling the sceptic's
smile.
That grave-calm following hard the taper's
glow
Snuffed of the poisoned Wind, awes not awhile
These veins with red ambitions overflow.
Starward ascendant still, he scorns to know
That time shall chill these passions till they
grow
All starved and stagnant with the wintry years.
Youth is all immortality ; for lo !
These repetends of triumphs fed with tears,
Find death a merest name through which the
God appears.

XII.

Thus from the hemlock of the Spoiler's reed
Our loved one's fame distils a splendor. Aye,
From out the night-shades of the past where
bleed
These memories, there rises a new day
Of godlier argument through which appears
The proof of that which shall not pass away.

Truth bless the hour that gathered many
tears—

Fixing each drop a throbbing star; and may
That name grow hallowed with the memoried
years—

In God, a man : a fame greater than king's or
seer's.

II.

Lo! the clouds are rolled away
From the sepulchre of the sky;
I behold the light of day—
Of the Day that shall not die.

Lo! the stone is rolled away
From the sepulchre of my heart;
I behold the Light and say:
Love! live on; my creed thou art.

III.

I made my couch of yew-boughs
Beside Apollo's water ;
And there spake I my love-vows
With Truth's all-sovereign daughter :
And as she bent those pale brows,
I listened what bethought her.

Oh in what golden vesture
Those virgin dreams enwound me ;
What Fames made quickening gesture
From eager nooks around me ;
I murmured 'I, your guest—your
Child-hope—I have found thee !'

And ah, my wish was golden
In promptings for mankind :
Brave words that should embolden
The purpose of young mind :—
With man to man beholden
More true, brave and refined.

Then by that priestly glenwood
Truth scorned the dogged clan
Who stand where their dead sires stood
Kissing Oblivion ;
For if to dare be manhood
Who dares not be a man ?

IV.

I woke in the mid-glooms of night,
Medreamt my faith was dead ;
My soul's lost heaven had hung curse
About my cursèd head.

For I had pondered long, long years,
And wond'ringly had weighed
The Why of living, when I should
Have knelt me down and prayed.

The curse of Cain hung there betwixt
The Past and the To-be ;
Philosophy was halt and dumb,
Christ's tears—thy wildered me.

And I saw Death : a tongue that swung
From heaven as in a bell ;
And when it tolled a spirit rolled
Down, down the grip of hell.

And I saw Time : much like a snake
With eyes wide—ah, so wide ;
And even while it blinked, one more
Sweet babe grew old and died.

And I saw Wisdom bowed austere,
And I saw Folly too ;
But where the line betwixt them lay,
Not e'en the wisest knew.

And poets and philosophers
Who read man's heart so well ;
But what they knew and what they guessed
Were wide as heaven from hell.

And I saw Hope—ah, melting thing
With censers in her eyes ;
But they soon died and proved that Hope
Was Death in fair disguise.

And I saw youth with wonder-look,
And sword poised full in air ;
But ere it fell and conquered hell,
He stood a greybeard there.

And meekest saints and prophets—ah,
Bold seekers for the true ;
They pondered, prayed and hoped for truth,
But truth not one soul knew.

And I saw Vice and Innocence—
Twin-born, twin-featured, they ;
But which was Innocence and which
Was Vice, not one dared say.

And young Endeavor dreaming dreams—
Mad dreams, gods' dreams for man ;
But where a godlike dream did end,
A godlike deed began.

I heard a voice—a wonder-voice
From heaven, or up from hell ;
But whether 't was voice of gods or fiends,
Not even a saint could tell.

Then honest Effort—though with eyes
On heaven—chained to the sod ;
But he rent twain the coward's chain,
Struck, and became a god.

And I saw Friendship, with two hands
Outstretched so pleadingly ;
And while the right cried, 'Hail, sweet
friend !'
The left hand said, 'Good bye !'

And I saw Truth, and I saw False :
There side by side they grew ;
And yet men called the true the false,
And swore the false the true.

And I saw all mankind cry out,
'Whence are we?—whither?—why?'
Then with the hot words at their lips,
Lay sidelong down and die.

And I saw saints, and devils too :
Men thought they knew them well ;
And yet they cried the fiend to heaven,
And cast the saint in hell.

And I saw sages wide-browed too,
With pouch, and quill, and staff ;
But their wild words of wisdom broke
Into a madman's laugh.

'What know'st thou then, O man?—what
prov'st?—
Whom judgest thou?' I cried ;
There was but one who knew the truth,
And him ye crucified.'

Then I saw Faith—an, thing of peace,
Of promise and repose ;
And in her warm outstretchèd palms
I buried my dead woes.

Aye, buried them deep beyond my sight :
These griefs with trust outshone ;
Then I took up my soldier's staff,
And cried, 'On, coward, on !'

V.

Ah, Love, mak'st thou death bitter ?—is't
thy seals

God-broke that proves the dear thrice dear,
With yet the shroud, the pall, the bier,
Mere playthings to the faith that feels?

And Death, prov'st thou Love's first philos-
ophy—

And parting but the iron pledge
That Day brought forth for Night to wedge
The Past from God's assured To be?

Oh teach me, Thou that dost create and know
The purpose of these random ways,
Why were these bright God-kissing days
Denied him--him who loved them so?

Why were they nurtured of that lifting weal
Which here but proves—alas! too true—
These blessed whiles but deeper drew
Our love o'er wounds that would not heal.

O man of deeds, how hero-like thy mien
Bold through the prism of our tears!
Death's reason this: that man appears
Himself but with a grave between.

Death's reason this : that dead to men thou art
Till born and cradled in the grave ;
Only the listening God that gave
And takes again, can search the heart.

Only the God that gave and takes again
Can understand thy life as thou ;
Christ with a cross may mark thy brow,
Which men shall swear the curse of Cain.

Death's reason this : that could we truly know
Our brothers as we dare believe,
This bitter world would cease to grieve,
And Peace make homes where now lives Woe.

VI.

Tell me, Seeker for the true,
Who first pierced the darkness through?—
Was it Faith, or Creed, or Fact :
Man to think or man to act ?
Who first thought these thoughts for you,
Nature-lover, tell me, who ?

Tell me, Rhapsodist of Light,
Whither lead'st thou through the night?—
Is man's mission but to-day,
Or with Truth coeval, say ?
Prophet is he for the right,
Or dumb Nature's parasite ?

Tell me, Speaker of the Word,
Is thy tongue a psalm or sword?—
Is thy purpose one with Truth,—
Age to age, and youth to youth ?
Hast thou one dead spirit stirred,
Or shalt thou too die unheard ?

Tell me, Doer of the Deed,
Do men fight for thee and bleed
That a laurel kiss thy brow,
Or is peace thy watchword now ?
Right or Might—which is thy need?—
God a truth, or some mere creed ?

Tell me, Son of battle lore,
Must we purchase Peace with war?—
Is the coin of all mankind
Love or hate—the heart or mind?
Art thou not a slave, and more—
Coward though a conqueror?

Tell me, God of the Unseen,
What this creed called 'Life' may mean?—
Whither, whence, and why, this strange
Anomaly of Death and Change?
Is man god, or thing unclean?—
Soul inspired, or mere machine?

Tell me, Soul of Beauty, say,
Must this pageant pass away?—
All this loveliness we love
But our own heart-madness prove?
Say not so! but better far,
All things for Love's purpose are.

VII.

Son of hymeneal Day!

Thou perjurer of Time:

Up, up, to thy mission,—away!

Thy indolence is crime.

Why cringe and toy thy talents to the base,—

Dumb effigy of their dead thought

Who are snail-tongued and hearted, when 't is
taught

There face to face

With patriarchs and prophets is thy place;

Counciled at heart

With seers of sects and eras, at whose mace

These master-births of art

Leap to the vaulting noon, and in this prime

'T is thine to rule away?

Son of the hero's Day!—

Thou temple built of tears:

How wanes thy faith away

In these unhallowed spheres

Of doubt and dareless paltroon-druggèd sleep

Called 'Custom,'—crushing down the
power

God-given thee on that most signal hour

When thou wert born to deep

And solemn heritage: bidden to weep

With weeping Love,

And joy with those who joy. Ah, holy keep
This birthright from above,
To serve thee beacon through the long, long
years,
West-waging manfully.

Son of ascendant Day!—
Knight of the Prophet's sword:
Take up thy staff and say,
‘Truth be my sovereign lord!’
And as thy sires took empire by the stroke
Of man—not mammon, do thou more:
Conquer thyself; then take to heart the lore
Of states and kings whose yoke
Hath fallen to decay. Their rigorous cloak
Of power and prime
Descend upon thee, and the gods invoke
This common weal, that Time
Cool not thy passion to see Truth restored
To thinking man for aye.

Son of triumphant Day!—
Press not thy couch this night;
But where thy head would lay,
There trim thy taper bright,
And make young Morning blush so late is she.
And there shall kneel swift angel visitants
Thy couch about, and with rich utterance

Pour moulten truth in thy dead ears ;

And unto thee

The maiden Triumphs shall espousèd be,

Keeping thee young in years

That shall in beauty grow.

Son of young Day!—

A wound on Nature bleeds till by thy free

Brave-bred authority

'T is healed ; then may'st thou steal the light

Of her dark eyes in turn,

Lighting thy lamp of search that shall outburn

The stars ; and by Nature honored so,

Be thou her priest for aye !

VIII.

Love! I looked in thy two eyes—
Like twin visions hid in tears—
Two lamps in a house of mourning,
Two souls through the gulf of years;
But my spirit caught a reason
From this bitterness of thine:
Grief is oft' but the refinement
Of Affection proved divine.

Love! I looked in Nature's eyes:
There methinks were tear-drops too—
Prisms for the better reading
Of the mortal good and true.
Lenses for enlarging purpose,
Magnifying little deeds.
To the proof that man's big heart-throb
Is the reach whence God proceeds.

Love! I looked e'en in Death's eyes:
Dreamst thou that no tears were there?
Little suns of peace and promise
That shall make the morrow fair?—
Diamond beacons on the eyelids
Of the great Undreamt beyond—
Vigils to the Godward spirit
That hath broke this mortal bond.

Love! I looked in Faith's warm eyes:
Through tears only can Faith see—
Two bright heavens with a Jordan
'Twixt that crystal look and me;
Two bright certitudes of Nature—
Truth in both the great and small;
Simply man with eyes on duty,
Simply love his all in all.

IX.

The lyre-strings of my youth vibrate once more,
Waking the dead Days' prophet!

While in one yielding tribute these fair
dreams

Like incense out of Tophet,
Outreach my soul that in wild music seems
To take up throne in heaven. Lo! before

This snowy synod of the gods' lode-star—
E'en at the threshold of this Court of Light—

Ascend all kneelingly
These warrior-fronted thoughts, discoursing
might

In austere majesty,
Gathering truth by sowing truth. Far, far,
From this bold, impious war of plumèd pomps,
And sly crime-kissing things
Maddened for power: far from the fool's de-
light

And wizard's paradise,
This faith begot of Triumph, springs
To godlier emprise, like some sweet rite—
Some faith-admonishing sacrifice
Of Israel upborne—till it transforms
All that it touches to its element:

Peace, cheer, and warmest heart's-ease.

O thinker brave! how from the storms

Of treason false with green-sick fire and feud,
 And this madman's disease.
Called 'Fame,' bred of a pauper's policy
 Mothered of fiends, and these
Dead repetends of base conventionality
 Called by its lover 'Living,'—ah, how flees
 The heart of man from these atrocities,
With bridled Nature swearing solitude!
 How doth the heart
Leap out with its self-faith, shrinking apace
 From the wan, hybrid face
Of scorn-criers and fools.

 O World ! thou art
 A gorgeous dwelling place ;
Yet they that love thee for thy sake alone,
 Lie as dead leaves in thy unsexed embrace,—
 Leaves light as air
By some sirocco of the shades upblown
 Out of the damned, dry-hearted, black
 Unknown !

X.

I met a seer upon the heath ;
Said I, 'What may Death be?—'
He snuffed the candle, sank and hissed
That question back to me.

I met a saint in the dim kirk—
Celestial robed was he ;
'And canst *thou* say what Death is?'—lo !
Death fell 'twixt him and me.

I kissed a child on the sea-sands :
'Thou tell me then?' cried I ;
But as I spake, a hot wind rose
And drank her young heart dry.

I asked of one whom men call 'fool :'
A laugh lit up his eye ;
'Thou tell me first why men were born,
I'll tell thee why they die.'

I asked of one whom men call 'wise ;'
But ah, he vied the fool ;
He answered with a question still
That put my heart to school.

I saw a babe fresh dawning of heaven :
‘And canst thou tell me—say?’
It smiled and tried to speak, but lo!—
Sighed and so passed away.

Still, still I wandered through the wood,
Praying the trees and flowers ;
They part their lips to speak and then
They wither with the hours.

‘Thou fool!’ cried I, ‘why task mankind
Throned on this funereal pall?
Life answers life with life, and Death
With death thus answers all.

XI.

Speak, thou hermit star of heaven !
Must we mission through these years
Till God's loaf with age grows leaven—
Bread so bitter-bought of tears?

Tell me, Sorceress of Morning !—
Thou fair-imaged of my youth :
Come these years with yew adorning
This Child-seeker after truth ?

I was sexton of God's churchyard,
Tolling bells from heaven swung ;
Came a youth, and cried, 'Oh search hard
For my hopes that died so young !'

'Nay ; these many years, good master,
Of these tombstone flocks around,
I have been their praying pastor,
But thy hopes have here no mound.'

'Strange—most unbelieving wondrous !'
Spake the youth of yew-reeds browed ;
First Fame kissed,—ah, then she shunned
us,—
We who wooed her, pale and proud.'

Then pressed through the itching even,
One—a greybeard mariner ;
‘Tell me!’ cried the seer bereaven,
‘Where hast laid my hopes that were?’

‘Sire, I know them not!’ I uttered ;
‘They were dead long ere my time ;’
Then his ashen lips—they muttered
Words half scripture, half a crime.

Then came warriors, statesmen, prophets,—
Shrunken minions of the past :
Cowlèd ghosts up from the Tophets
Of dead Circumstance amassed.

And they prayed the self-same query,
And the self-same answers kissed ;
Then they turned and wept—those weary
Martyred wrecks, unknown, unmissed.

Then took I my yoke upon me,
Swore Ambition’s God anew ;
And no sun of earth outshone me
In my faith to dare and do.

And to-day it is grown greater—
Firmer than ’t was ere before ;
But who says ’t was spleen-eyed Fate, or
Truth the amulet they wore?—

They who came to me and wondered
Of their gods young-eyed and strange,
And those rainbow fames that sundered
With the thunder-curse of change!

Speak, thou hermit star of heaven!—
Must we mission through these years
Till God's loaf with age grows leaven—
Bread so bitter-bought of tears?

Minabel

Loch Lomon.—1885.

Minabel

A TALE.

I**I.**

Ah, friary vigil of All-hallows eve !—
Now Memory masks with weirds her children pale,
And fancies from the fertile bosom heave,
Crouching them sly upon the eyelids frail.
See! bridged Twilight in her moon-warm veil,
Hath crept down from the altars of the sky
With her druid knight in ebon coat of mail,
While the young Hours their tributes kneelingly
Hymn to the panting stars, 'mid wildest melody.

II.

And stark yon towers cut twain the naked sky,
Like giant priests tossing the censer-moon ;
Night-ghouls to their black eaves shrink
 hidingly,
While the saint's prayers on the dead silence
 swoon.
Ah, Death ! find'st thou in night thy fullest
 noon
Wherein thy gods compound these hooded
 spells ?—
Pale Autumn with her lutes all out of tune,
Kisses the mound where the dead Summer
 dwells,
And o'er it swings to heaven her requiem
 of bells.

III.

The ancient halls in melancholy brood,
Now people with their legends of the past,—
The revel riot and wan widowhood
Of bridled Beauty, of her race the last.
Black armors bow as if some thinkings vast
Crept serpently their voiceless bosoms cold :
Bethinking how the trump of death had
 massed

These warrior lords who strode these floors
of old,
And to the drowsing hours their ancient tales
retold.

IV.

Cornelia's face wore a faint twilight frown—
A frown that cloaked a prayer; but she
spake not,
Making but nervous stir as followed down
Her brother's brow those aching volumes
hot
From her love-orphaned eyes. Had she
forgot
That frail one whom the morn had ta'en
away—
That fair-souled innocent so God-begot
Into the keeping of this sainted day—
That maiden faith whom death and tombs
could not dismay.

V.

Ah, full of sadness was Cornelia's eye,
Pensive in far-off wonder-dreams of awe;
And foamy-footed shadows paced them by
Those throbbing lids--fancies in which
saw

What owned not utt'rance. Then soft did
she draw
Her brother's side—he who had knelt him
near,
Pond'rous of thought, lab'ring of heart to
thaw
This ice-bound problem of his love's young
year,
Nor felt his praying cheeks a sister's holy
tear.

VI.

With intertwined arms the moveless twain
Listened in secret panic to the wind
Fretted like infant motherless in pain,
And mutual dread rose on the mutual mind.
Only the heart could see : reason was blind ;
The itching silence rousing to a din
The simplest stir in these vast halls confined,
And with the sense keen-sharpened from
within,
They weighed the truth that was, and all that
might have been.

VII.

'Oh sister mine,' reed-voiced the brother
spake,

‘How since the morn my rubied hope hath
flown!—

How hath the Christ exalted, but to make
This heart grief-hardened, kiss the charnel-
stone!

And now when most my prayers, auspicious
grown

In the full faith of saints, lifts up her weal,
My Minabel is laid all, all alone

In yonder churchyard nave ; and I shall feel
Her trothing kiss no more unto my meek
appeal.

VIII.

‘Oh God ! not dead—she is not dead, I say ;
I could not let them lay her in the ground ;
And though I watched her through the long,
long day,

Nor saw one feature stir, nor heard a sound,
I swore this night she sleep beneath no
mound—

I knew not why—she must not : that is all ;
Not death—no, no ; ’t is but a sleep pro-
found ;

And not her brow in yonder chapel-hall,
But ah, my heart alone wears my love’s
funeral pall !’

IX.

Though sweet Cornelia's heart was wedging
 wide
With love that half forgot her easeless woe,
She murmured not ; but dreamt what holy
 bride
Might have been blest him whom she hon-
 ored so ;
And how that great good heart was wont to
 flow
Its tideless love so pure and passionate,
Upon that breast now chilled as the young
 snow,
That would respond with troths immaculate,
His pleading kiss no more—she, now a sky-
 child's mate.

X.

That bride so soon to be her brother's joy—
That hero's constancy she cherished so—
Oh Minabel ! how could the grave decoy
Thy young love thus to lay the bosom low
In the far valley churchyard where the snow
So soon shall thatch thy castle of the tomb,
Making this yew-couch of malignant woe
Thy bride-bed on the even when thy groom
Was all a-flame to wear the amaranth and
 plume ?

XI.

The youth upraised his eyes catching the last
Hard-labored flicker of the taper by,
Stirred to the conscience that his flowery past
Thus to the socket wanèd down to die ;—
Ah, that warm feature of the virgin sky
Seemed struck to scorn and sorrow on his
sight ;
And while he turned a hero's melting eye
Up to the ancient window at his right,
The moon flung at his feet mal-omens blear
and white.

XII.

Like huntress from the forest of the stars,
With pouch and quiver at her girdle caught,
That heroine of all yon skiey wars—
Priestess of eld mid lores of earth untaught—
The moon, came forth and at their still feet
wrought
Weird images along the ancient floor ;
And strange, strange folk on that pale stage
were brought,
Dancing the death-dance of the seers of yore :
He stared, then rose aghast—hissed, lo ! and
all was o'er.

XIII.

‘Art thou a prophet?’ soft Cornelia moaned
In her wild-visioned soul; then closer drew
Her brother’s side, and with a will disowned
These lovers Death who win whome’er they
woo.

‘Oh sainted Mother! shield the dead and you,
Sweet son of Faith—thrice brother by thy
tears—

God’s will: not mine.’ Ah, thus the maiden
threw

A cloak upon her heart, melting broad years
Into one moment’s prayer—prayer that but
heaven hears.

XIV.

Cornelia shuddered: for that gallant arm
Never before had falterd at her side.

‘Forgive me, sister; cease thy sweet alarm:
Thy love in mine and I in thine, abide,
Whatever heaven or fallen Fates betide.

But, gentlest one, I saw most hideous things
When yonder smoking taper palely died,—
All anguished shapes with wizard-painted
wings

Dancing a devil-dance where yonder wan
moon flings

XV.

That pale arena for half man, half beast.
And I saw two—two spider-eyed and cold,
Holding o'er prostrate from infernal feast ;
And there—there on the soft transparent gold,
Sported with some sweet thing the good
saints hold
God-reverenced and hallowed over all.
And as I watched them at their revels bold,
I shuddered ; for I thought what might
befall.....
Lo! with an impious laugh, they melted on
the wall!

XVI.

'Nay, marvel not my words, oh, sister sweet,
Be not affright by these ill-fevered dreams—
Ha! God—once more....oh, sister, I entreat
Hence from this place—come, let us bane
these themes
That so berate us. Come ; thou'lt drink of
streams
Turned by thy blush of love to rubied wine.
Come ; lead thou on....how deft thy foot-
step seems
To crush the darkness! Thus : thy hand in
mine ;
Thus, gentlest one—my pride, my solace all
divine!'

XVII.

But think you that those honied words could
hide
Aught that embalmed that warrior arm in fear
From sweet Cornelia's heart? Nay; rather
belied
What he would fain disguised from self—the
tear
Of bleeding passion, by some wanton seer
To poison turned on the o'er-wearied breast;
But on her heart, like some black mutineer
Of hell his vision fell, while still oppressed,
Grave omens darkened down that forehead
of unrest.

XVIII.

There was a sigh, a forcèd smile, a kiss,
A tender vow that stole from eye to eye,
A hand-clasp of devotion all submiss
To heaven, and there they parted; he, to dry
His tears on stoic reason: she, to lie
In her still chamber, and with lids wedged
wide,
Gloat the mad revels of that family
Of fiends round one who there lay cru-
cified,
Feasting their savage eyes a wild satiety.

XIX.

Then softly stole she to her chamber lone,
Charging her maid swear silence at her side;
Nor ventured word, for all her spirit flown
Within one refuge there to brood and bide,
Was far too sacred ever to confide.
And so she drooped her lids feigning a
sleep;
But soft her spirit with the one that died
Kept up communion till the midnight deep,
And then,—ah, then from heaven her secret
could not keep.

XX.

All feather-sandaled thus the maiden crept
From her pillow where had bowed no rest,
Gave one quick wonder at the couch where
slept
Her supple maid, then knelt she down and
blest
That guardian God upon whose fragrant
breast
Her mate that was, was laid all sinlessly,
And fast Affection's tear-eyes manifest
Reasoned resolve into that anguished eye,
And queries kissed to heaven: What meant
this word—'to die?'

XXI.

Then rose she as from some death-mating
trance
Trumped by a regent monitor of God ;
And on that dun black stage of night did
dance
To her lorn eyes those terror-kings that trod
The sunken depths beneath the sunken sod.
But valiance sceptred on that liegeless hour,
Slept at her torn heart's side ; and with a rod
Of woman's will,—ah, most propitious dower,
Struck headlong to the shades these gloom-
fiends that devour.

XXII.

The moon knelt at her feet awhile she drew
The sober mantle o'er her reedy frame ;
And only they that peopled darkness knew
How beautiful forth from her couch she
came.
And only they—sweet elves half-flushed of
shame—
Made haste to shield her from the eager air,
Vouchsafing grace to reassure her aim
Which seemed, in truth, faint-mothered of
despair,
Till done, she trembling crept down, down
the great broad stair.

XXIII.

Oh shield her, Saints ! aye, shield her from
the night
With its dread councils of the dark and deep.
Poor, sorrow-hearted, willow-weeping wight
Who could not from her friend the secret keep,
Even if Death—that vesper-imaged sleep—
Dared forth to wedge those sister loves apart ;
But on she pressed like fever-dreams that
creep
Through the sick slumbers with such tortuous art,—
On to the churchyard kirk, there to lay bare
her heart.

XXIV.

The court was gained, and lo ! the open sky ;
Then felt she those child-fears forsaking fast,
And this communion which she held on high,
God-proven now by all the stars that cast
Their vestal-eyed vouchsafements from their
vast
And ancient eyes all goldenly her way,
Seeming to wed the present with the past,
Shaming these heady dreams that would affray
So innocent a heart as scarce had learned to
pray.

XXV.

The great clock shuddered in the haunted
tower
As if half 'fraid to trespass on the night ;
But with her eyes in heaven, this maiden
flower
Braved steadfastly her path all neutral bright,
Pressing her fingers to her bosom white....
The clock—it ceased ; lo ! like a dirge for one
Taking the convent vows of eremite,
It died ; and there our virgin champion
Entered the forest deeps grey-cowlèd like a
nun.

XXVI

Hush ! how from every ancient yawn and nook
Unearthly things came forth to greet that
face.
How lingered they in every branch that shook
Death-rattles to the fiends with mad grimace !
How strode they forth from every hiding
place
Where thing unholy would most likely be,
Bearing cold maladies in their embrace—
Damps of the tomb whence they were scarce
set free ;
But she,—ah, child of Faith, no thing of pain
saw she.

XXVII.

At last the churchyard. 'T was a solemn place
E'en in the wreathing haloes of the morn ;
But now each tombstone was a pallid face—
An infant Christ on the still moon-watch born.
And she—this still-enduring child and lorn—
Pressed up the narrow aisles that part the
 graves,
Charging the panic of her heart to scorn,
Treading a warrior step like one who braves
Defiance to the fiends and thus a nation saves.

XXVIII.

The chapel—oh, what holy resting-place
On the death-march from cradle to the tomb,
Wherein that morn, seeming in Death's embrace,
Was laid that shieldless bud of Christly bloom,—
Laid gently there, her swift soul's anteroom
Ere in that castle of the frosten ground
She 'spoused be to that black-featured groom
Who builds for saints his mansion of the mound,—
Aye, saints and knaves alike, the crowned and
 the uncrowned.

XXIX.

A bat affrayed of the bowed stranger's step,
Upstirred the silence with distressful wing,
Rousing the maiden heedless of the dead,
From her still reverie ; and, stricken thing,
With sudden halt and frame all shuddering,
She found her by the lonely chapel door :
Then for the first, her task—it seemed to wring
Too great a grief, and staggering to that floor
Of crouching sods, she knelt one tremulous
moment more.

XXX.

'Oh virgin Mother ! what delirious oath
Compels my reason to this madman's quest ?
What seek I here ? Oh by my brother's troth—
His poor child-bride God knows hath found
her rest.
What whip of grief urges this passive breast
On a fool's mission to the confined dead ?
Oh pity, heaven, for her thus dispossessed
Of faith..... But hush ! hark ! what low
moan of dread
Through yon dark chapel nave into the mid-
night bled?.....

XXXI.

O Christ ! thou pour'st compassion on the
blind,

And weak, and palsied : bear me to my feet . . .
Ha ! once again—that voice. Sweet saints !
unbind
This frensied heart and let me haste retreat,
Help ! or I perish in this madcap heat—
Mother ! brother ! . . . ha ! once again that cry ;
How numb my brain—my heart hath ceased
to beat . . .
But list !—’t is her’s, ’t is her’s. Sweet saints
on high !—
Shield me—’t is her’s—God ! God !—no, no :
she shall not die.’

xxxii.

Then struggling o’er these mounds of ancient
dead,
She hissed to heaven : ‘I am a child no more !’
And with her arms flung high above her head,
She plunged forward against the chapel door :
It yielded, and she fell prone to the floor,
Her hand—it touched a woman’s icy feet ;
She shrank, ah, then she clasped them, for
they wore
The silken sandals of that death-bride sweet
Who only yestermorn slept in her winding sheet.

xxxiii.

A yawning moment, but it bridged an age
Ere that sweet childling faith rose from her
swoon ;

Ten thousand madcap dreams made pilgrimage
Down on that crucial heart ; but soon, ah, soon
She snatched her spirit back whence it was
hewn
Asunder, and with braving trust upraised.
O Christ ! how cruelly the bloated moon
Through the wide door upon that phantom
gazed ;
Dumd sate th' beholding one with all her
senses crazed.

XXXIII.

With eyes full wide she stared the figure tall—
That spectral attitude at her faint side,
When lo ! a wreath from the wan breast did fall
Upon her brow as if she too had died.
Then starting back, she threw her hands full
wide,
Clasping the shape that bent before her face,
Ah, then sank back more strangely terrified,
For that still form stood cold in her embrace—
Cold as the coffin-pyx whence she had crept
apace.

XXXV.

The silence—'t was the god-sire of the night :
The night, of all the people of the tomb ;
The stars with bleeding looks so leprous white
Crept sly into that solemn-rited room ;

Crept with their twinkling beacons to illume
Those ravished altars priestless and alone
Save one dim candle laboring on the gloom—
A sad companion for a spirit flown
To vigil through the shades a Christ-child to
the throne.

XXXVI.

Before the altar stood the widowed bier
Mounted by that black castle of the dead ;
One moment gone, by her who standeth here
'T was tenanted, aye, there she laid her head ;
And there the trance that frose her bosom fled,
And she awoke—poor orphan elf of pain—
Awoke, O God ! to what a world of dread ;
Mayhap 't were better had the 'wildered brain
Shattered, and so sank back on easeful death
again.

XXXVII.

But nay ; 't was other will than her's that rose
And kissed to life that spirit's citadel
From which mayhap it never fled : who knows ?
But there that lidless silver-portaled shell
Stood mockingly, as if an infidel
Of death and all its creeds that harrow man ;
And torn shrouds strewn as at the brink of hell,
Told how a being by some godly plan
Was snatched back into life from slumbers
lethæan.

XXXVIII.

Cornelia bowed and prayed for heaven to nurse
Some valid purpose to her yielding aim,
Solving this myst'ry, whether crown or curse,
That ran dull poison through her feeble frame.
Ah, then sweet answer to her faint prayer came,
And trust renewed that heart betroubled so,
And soft she rose, and with a secret shame
For this faint fear, all, all she seemed to know
And with a titan will struck back her rebel woe.

XXXIX.

'O Minabel! all, all—I know it all,'
She whispered; but those lips made no reply.
And then Cornelia threw her sable shawl
About the form death seemed to beautify
By its short sojourn in that angel's eye,
Caressing the stiff hands that cleaved her side,
Entreating still this maiden mystery
Till through the open port the twain did glide,
Two saint-like shapes on, on into the church-
yard wide.

XL.

Then turned Cornelia to her speechless charge
And as the moon laid bare that sculptured face,
She looked, and lo! the maiden's eyes full
large
Gazed vacant as upon some far-off chase.

The brave girl trembled, yet to her embrace
The closer drew her Minabel, and spake :
' Oh angel Mother ! plead for all the grace
Thy Christ endues his lovers, for my sake ;'
And on and on thy trailed, leaving a starry
wake.

XLI.

The wood that held the churchyard in its
palms—
A treasure secret from the world profane—
They entered ; and the beggar-boughs asked
alms
With outstretched hands a-cold and soft com-
plain,
Even of this benighted vestal twain,
Sweet nuns on some dark Dead-Sea pilgrim-
age.
And the witched winds made moan as if in
pain,
And druid stars in their sunk hermitage
Peeped through the thatching leaves down on
this maiden mage.

XLII.

Oh, weirdest of ye ancient sisterhoods
Who counted rosaries of dead men's skulls,—
Who raised strange altars in primeval woods
And plucked the vitals from the plump sea-
gulls,—

Thine were the spells this rack of Change
annuls ;
Ye sported with that hostage bowed by Time ;
But here the lustre of your glamour dulls,
Though night was ne'er so hideously sublime,
When tombstones pray to heaven as if living
were crime.

XLIII.

But on and on this maiden pioneer
Bearded the darkness with a sovereign tread,
Nor glanced abroad lest over-moved of fear,
She swoon amort upon that sodden bed ;
And there with one mayhap already dead,
Her frail soul might disown its earthy shell,
And all the busy Mysteries that wed
Wan Midnight, in their cerements come and
dwell
Even by that sick soul, swinging their censer-
spell.

XLIV.

The border gained, the open sky once more
In wonder-tribute bent sweet homage down ;
And strength into that swoonèd heart did
pour,
The jealous moon threw from her brow the
crown.
Then turned the maid to her in death-white
gown,

Daring to speak. Ye saints ! how fell her words
Upon the greedy air that seemed to drown
Her griefs in panic like the lone death-bird's
Where India's Silent Tower the bones of mil-
lions girds.

XLV.

But in reply to that half strangled voice
No answer came. And still those strange
eyes gazed
Godward on some Unseen of far-off choice—
Some vast Undreamt in yon death-deeps en-
mazed.
Sweet Star of Bethlehem the angels praised
Ere thou returned to joy thy sister so !—
She who but yestereve drank till half crazed
Of her brave brother's grief, all heaven doth
glow
In thy sweet eyes e'en now as but an hour ago.

XLVI.

The castle seemed like magian tall to tread
Closer and closer from that region high,
Cowled in some druid habit of the dead
Against the cloud-zoned, talismanic sky.
And now they passed the portal safely by,
Creeping on to the mammoth oaken door ;
It creaked—they entered, and with faintest sigh
It closed behind them ; all was dark before.

Still like witched winds they swept along that
great hall floor.

XLVII.

Ah, then with taper in her staid right hand,
She threw her left about her wonder-guest,
Urging her as by an enchanter's wand
Up the broad stair as onward still they pressed
On to the chamber where from strange unrest
Mid wild resolves a weird-won hour ago
She crept ; and there as one of fiends possessed,
She prostrate fell upon the white couch low,
Weeping—yet wherefore ?—oh, ye braves of
woman's woe.

XLVIII.

Again she dashed the tears that clung her
cheek,
And sprang back to that wordless being's side
Who gazed still vacant with no voice to speak,
No ears to hear, no glow in her eyes wide.
Aye, all of nature seemingly had died
Within that breast so marble-hued and cold,
And still, the wight obediently complied
With all her loved one's sweet enforcement
told,
And as she stood, down-dropt her mantle fold
on fold.

XLIX.

And there Cornelia robed her for the night,
Bearing those cerements all, all away ;
And in her pensive trim ethereal white,
She drew the weird one by the stiff hands,
aye,
E'en drew her to her humble knees to say
With her that even prayer as oft' of yore ;
And in that gloom of midnight did she pray
Such words as never swept her lips before,
While knelt the meek soul down beside her on
the floor.

L.

Oh God ! what record made that prayer in
heaven?—
What stars did reel with a celestial stir !—
What angels drank its depth and hence were
given
O'er deeper feeling power to minister.
Thou potent-natured child-philosopher,
Pouring out virtue from thy grief-wrung
heart !—
Of thy sweet deeds God be the arbiter ;
What thou hast spoke, no mortal lips impart :
Thy words shall live as heaven that made but
shields its art.

LI.

Then soft they rose, and in her azure bed
She laid her dear one with the first sweet
 smile
That kissed her lips since yesternorn had fled
Her God-born peace into that long exile ;
And then she, too, with thoughts sweet-
 cheered erewhile,
Crept in and nestled down by that cold frame,
Daring upon her heart to reconcile
These hooded mysteries which o'er her came,
And in that couch still warm, essayed her fears
 to tame.

LII.

But aweless sleep sits not on the shut lids
Though wooed by warriors if the heart's
 a-flame ;
And her the supple midnight hour forbids
To nurse to slumber, and bold dreams de-
 fame
The peace of that shut bosom into shame
And riot rankling 'mid these throbbings sad ;
And then with hushed compulse did she ex-
 claim :
' Death ! art thou come, or is this poor wit
 mad ?—
Sweet heaven ! why this galled union unto my
 full cup add ?'

LIII.

‘She lives ! she lives !’ and then in tempest
doubt :

‘Nay, ’t is a mad, mad dream, and I am reft.
Good Saints ! rail back this myth that hounds
me out

With devils’ craft taking my soul in theft !’
And then as one with her staid reason cleft,
She leaned her warm brow close her Minabel,
Pressing her keen ear to that bosom’s left
And listened—nothing ! not one throb did
swell

That stone-cold sepulchre where once a soul
did dwell.

LIV.

Then back upon her pillow all undone,
Cornelia hid her face, clenching her teeth ;
And sweat—hard sweat, from that chilled
brow did run

Adown her cheek bathing her hair beneath.
Ah, then half swoon half slumber like a
wreath

Descended easefully upon that brain,
And the sick heart sunk in a golden sheath
Of rest and quiet, those sly things of pain
Forsook their cruel sport and fled nightward
again.

LV.

God calm her now—that weary-drowsèd one,
Sweet-souled extremist in all logic good—
She who knew not if Death had here undone
Her brother's bride, or she herself was wooed
Of that alms-asking Knight, and she now stood
Upon the threshold of the castle Christ
She long had prayed with all her womanhood
E'en to be worthy of ; or if enticed
Into some hell where love to hate lies sac-
rified.

LVI.

Peace unto her ! that anguish-swoonèd child,
That patient oracle of will divine ;
And shield her, ye who 'friend the night
exiled !—
And grant her refuge, thou pacific shrine !—
Soothest of homes where poppies intertwine
And Love attunes the world to second heaven,
Make pilgrimage and easefully recline,
Bearing away this heart's unholy leaven,
And slumber float a-down as on the sleepers
seven.

II.

I.

The Faith-child of the morning rose and filled
The cup of all the East with rubied wine.
The joyless riots of the night were stilled,
And all the cloud-nymphs of the dawn did
 twine
The triumphs of young Day with sprays
 divine,
Kissing libations brimmed of diamond dew:
'Peace to the parted star!' Thy azure sign,
Sweet Mother! sees new-born in godliest hues
All laws of life and love that virgin Rapture
 woos.

II.

And he, the castle's youthful son and lord—
Cornelia's brother and her flushed heart's
 pride—
Came forth from couch where many a predal
 hoard

Of dreams with baneful offspring did abide.
Came forth with heart as dead as it had died
Thrice in the rheumy tomb-damps of the
 night—
Came forth to wander where his pale young
 bride
With his own hand he laid so sinless white
In the broad chapel arms vouchsafed his touch
 and sight.

III.

That sanctuary of the early gods—
The forest, like its priest the young knight
 pressed,
As if he reared his temple from these sods
Whereon he knelt and poured his voicings
 blest.
And on, with head bowed low upon his breast,
He struggled through the music-weaving
 wood,
Nor joyed the mating bird above her nest—
It mocked him; and he drew in one black
 hood
His thoughts upon his heart, therein to house
 and brood.

IV.

He neared the holy kirk with quivering lip ;
'Up, up, my spirit brave !' he inly said,

Nor felt the sweats from his ribbed temples
drip,

But drew him on and up the steps that led
To that sweet sanctuary of the dead,

Raising his eyes e'en at the open door ;

'What is't?' he shrieked. 'The guardian goddess fled ?....'

Then fell he prone upon that sodden floor,
Stunned of belief ; and oh, his face—what hell
it wore !

V.

Then like sweet lightning to the gorgèd cloud,
The truth sped to his blind o'er-sanguine
brain ;

And seized of the mad thought, he cried
aloud :—

'She lives—Oh God !' and so sank back again.

Poor fag of savage love and all its pain,

So still benight of the sick raven's wings—

Supine he lay like some Faith's martyr slain,

Dreamful at heart of fairest, soothest things

Beading his crownless brow with angel ministrings.

VI.

Lo ! all beheld he through the open door,—
The narrow host robbed of its treasure now,
These cerements that swept the altar floor,

Yon candle drowsing out its perjured vow,—
All, all he saw, and on his gallèd brow
The leaden logic bore down such a weight,
His mind and he parted—he knew not how,
But had he been a Titan's elder mate,
'T would tasked him as a god to bear his risen
state.

VII.

Long, long he lay prone on the sapphired
dews ;
The sun—it came and sported on his cheek,
And of those tears made rainbows of rich hues,
All promise-bearing to his spirit weak.
The parted lips of heaven seemed to speak,
And shadows played upon that cloistered
breast
As 'twere a harp of Faith, and they with
meek
Soft finger-tips rocked the mad world to rest,
And God in all things pure was triumph manifest.

VIII.

Ah, then with step light as the virgin dew,
A breathless form came through the wingèd
wood
With eagerest eyes and cheeks of amorous
hues—

One of the Graces in Love's sisterhood—
Came like a freshful fragrance of the good,
Type of the Hand that touched to sight the
 blind :
Came chapelward till suddenly she stood
Tearful beside him—him her whole mankind,
Her whole heart's creed—then knelt she low
 where he reclined.

IX.

So bent she down with lips all solace now,
Pressing his cheek to rouse him from that
 dream
She knew was sweet for well she read that
 brow ;
But be it very heaven, no joy could seem
One half so beautiful as her's,—no theme
Of angels half so warm, so pure, so free ;
And softly, swiftly in a panting stream
His thoughts flowed back unto her kisses
 three :
He ope'd his eyes, and lo ! a face all open glee.

X.

'O sister, sister !' prayed the orphan youth,
'Thy smiles ! thy look of love !—speak, speak,
 what is't ?....'
Then gazing at the kirk as if the truth
Still hung in mystery, he muttering hissed,

And cloaked his brow is if a charnel mist
Swung in the breach and would not rend away.
And then Cornelia clasped his hands and
kissed
Those temples hot, and more than tongue
could say,
Drew from her breast a ring that 'mid the
sweet folds lay.

XI.

At sight of that fair token did his eyes
Bewilder, and his cheek grow bloodless pale ;
And then love seemed to solve its own surprise:
Seizing the rose, with one disburdened wail,
He took it to his lips, and on her veil
Fell weeping—aye, the first and strangest
tears
That drenched his yearning lids since woman
frail
Made e'en a child of him ; and all swift fears
And griefs were triumphs now, swelling mo-
ments to years.

XII.

She took his hands as many a time before,
And rising drew them to her even side ;
Then bent these lovers homeward, while each
wore
To each the truth of truths no art could hide.

Aye, for the very fulness of its tide,
Love choked and could not force its tributes
free ;
And there they pressed the paths where she
did guide
But yesternight that maiden mystery
Who sank and rose again as Venus from the
sea.

XIII.

On, on they glided, neither venturing word,
But cheered of that divinest mutual cheer,
'Mid omens sweet fresh from the throated bird,
And promise on the early chanticleer.
Oh Christ ! what morn for Youth some great
career
To swear mid-venture, and make bold for
fame :
To drive back Xerxes, or that mutineer
Of hell with warrior heart that knows no
shame
For God and honesty, in some brave faith-fed
aim.

XIV.

'Good brother ! yesternight was Hallow-e'en :
I promised on my heart to greet you well—
E'en in the thorny season of thy spleen
To prove a bride would in thy household dwell.
And now, by all the stars the seers foretell

I shall fulfil the holy vow I made,
And thou shalt see despite the lone kirk knell,
That saintly one that hath our prayer obeyed :
Up, brave, my warrior knight !—this be thy
love's crusade.'

xv.

He answered not ; but clenched his bloodless
hand,
Unsteady stepped and forward leaned his
head ;
The knotted veins did on his brow expand,
As they through yester's Dolorosa led.
And sweet Cornelia when her words were said,
Pressed warm her rosary to her soft breast,
Praying—nay, not with words : her very tread
Was a most fervent orison expressed,
All hope, faith, gratitude—one rite of saints
thrice blest.

xvi.

They passed the court ; the groom—ah, wil-
dered one,
Shrank e'en as if a god swept holy by ;
Or in her person fair a fragrant sun
Had dropt to earth. On through the needle's
eye
The twain quick glided from the open sky,
Into the hall mosaic drear and old,

And softly scaled the stair that led so high
It seemed to heaven ; and with a passion bold
On, on,—then halting, stood black-mantled
fold on fold.

XVII.

He dared not more—that Spartan-fathered
boy
Who would have ravaged headlong through
the grave
To beard a foe ; but like a serpent's toy,
He stood enchanted in that mazèd nave.
In vain he scourged : ' Oh dastard soul !—be
brave ;'
Clenching his palm upon that beating sore.
But on swept brave Cornelia ; and that slave
Of love uplooked—lo ! through her chamber
door
She fled, and there alone the heavy cross he
bore.

XVIII.

What thousand turmoils through his arrowy
brain
Dashed riot as he stood in dread amaze,
Gloating the mystery like coward Cain,
Rocked on the wild delirium of his gaze !
Then half recovering from his wonder-daze,
He struggled onward as a scarce-taught child ;

His heart now cold with fear, now warm with
praise,
On toward that sanctuary where his heaven
smiled
Halting amain full oft' and his spent limbs
reviled.

XIX.

Then leaning half upon the ancient wall,
He crept like snail on to that mammoth
door;
Lo! 't was ajar, and through it heard he all :
A voice that seemed his dead soul full restore,
A voice that lifted his faint-throbbing core
To Eden, and this faltering arm of woe
Into a manhood never felt before,—
That virtue by which did the gods o'erthrow
The shades of Erebus, bearding them back
below.

XX.

'What moves thee so?' a whispering plaint
he heard,
'How strange thy face, O sister, and so pale !
Ah, what mad hap hath rent thy weal, sweet
bird,
Prompting these myst'ries on thy eyelids
frail?
Oh surely have I not well slept? . . . some veil

'Twixt this bright hour and yesternight seems
 swung—
Troth ! 't was a strange, strange sleep. Oh
 tell the tale ;
Some wonder-thing hath happened that thy
 young
Sweet lute of love be thus by these wild looks
 unstrung.'

XXI.

The youth knelt low upon the stone-cold
 floor,
Straining his spirit toward that voicing fair
To drink its depth and on its sweetness pour
The warm libations of his constant prayer.
How that faint oracle robbed young Despair
Of all dread usurpation on his heart !—
How came those words like angels unaware
Closing the wound, and by some saintlike art
Wore 'way the scar where fell that barbed and
 poisoned dart !

XXII.

'Sister ! draw near,' flowed on that voice
 a-flame ;
'Draw near, sweet friend ; oh, why this net-
 tled brow ?—
These warm cheeks by some anguish strange
 or shame,

Dry of their bloom?—oh, tell me, sister, now:
When came I here?—how came I?—tell me,
how?—

For I remember—I remember naught.
Oh weep not so; thus, o'er my bosom bow—
God! what a change....Speak! speak! hath
ill been wrought
My love—thy brother?... Ha!—Christ praised!
....'t was a horror-thought.

XXIII.

'Then why thy ravished temples bead with dew
As with some secret bleeding, sister sweet?
Oh, answer not with tears and that strange hue
Changing upon thy cheeks from chill to
heat....
Oh, I have slept a long, long sleep replete
With dreams so beautiful, so golden all,
I half do wish me back in that strange seat—
That border heaven in which I seemed to
fall—
Why weep so, sister,—say, what dares thy
heart apall?—

XXIV.

'Have I e'er done thee any evil thing—
One word, one look?—forgive me, gentle dear.
Thou know'st through all mal-fortunes I
would cling

Thy holy side....what say'st?—for joy thy
tear?—

For joy?—what joy? Oh bending heaven
hear!

What stirs this spirit from its tempered range?

I see, yet know not ; list', and still my ear

Mocks me! Oh what mad world hath wrung
this change

Upon all holy things with glammers deep and
strange?....'

xxv.

Then sprang the nervèd youth as one long dead

Recovering the light, clasping his hands

Unto his grief-washed eyes ; and bowed of
head,

One moment stood as on the Dead Sea sands

Braving a dream. Ah, then with heart half
man's

Half god's, invoking, with a backward tread,

His arms he wrenched as if to break the bands

That chained his soul, and raised them o'er
his head,

Then leaped through th' parted door and knelt
down by her bed.

xxvi.

Down at her feet the stricken lover lay,

A prostrate worshipper before that shrine,

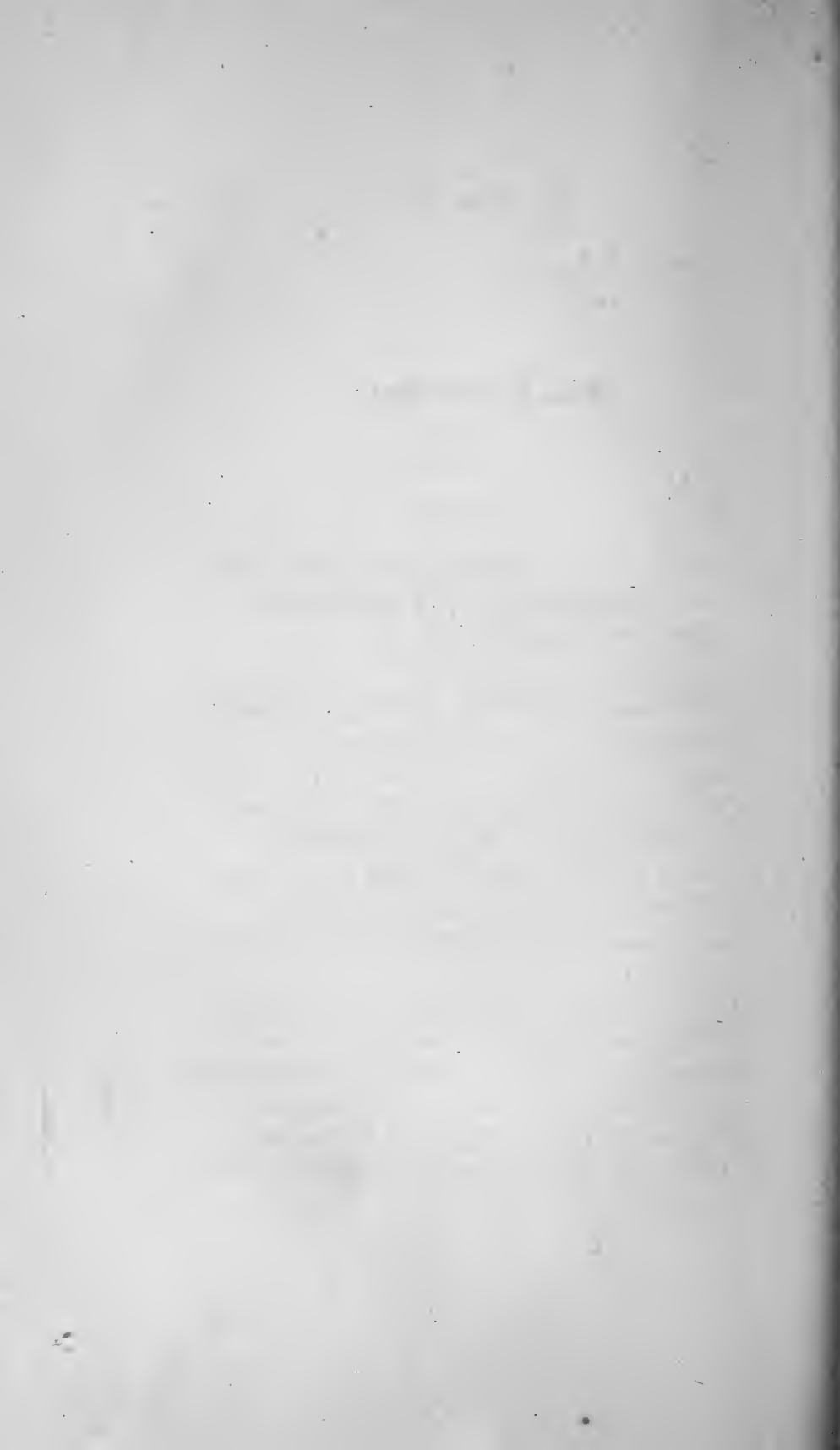
Weeping the tears that melted all away
The frosts of death about those shrouds di-
vine.

God treasure thee, and be his peace all thine,
Thou earnest one whose love is proven so,—
And saints pour on thy faltering soul the
wine

The Savior drank and buried mortal woe,
And, hearer! thy cup as well with that same
overflow.

The Truth-god

Venice.—1886.



The Truth-God:

BOOK FIRST.

Chorus of the Arts.—The solitude of the Truth-God.—The birth and fall of the First-born of Science and Truth.

“O Priest eterne of the all-templed Space—
“Thou genesis of the dumb Increate—
“Truth! by celestial act the lifter-up
“Of the void-wombed paternity of heaven;
“Another Day hath swept its sacrifice
“Low at thy big approach, and by such proof
“Of sweet allegiance to our primal sire,
“Sworn down the conquest gods on thy right
arm,
“With Earth and all yon star-world intervals
“Within the reach of thy supremest touch,
“Feudal in suppliance, craving all their being
“But in the shadow of thy sovereign hest.
“Another Day hath pilgrimed up the slant
“’Twixt the divided stars, through forlorn
moors

“Shoreless as Erebus lamped by the fiends,
“Republics sunless and unsexèd realms
“Of the unpeopled and ungirdled Free,
“O’er crowned and battlemented keeps of
Faith,
“O’er things called ‘holy’ proffered to the dogs
“For filial worship, over mountainous scisms
“Propped priestless save by ignorance of thee,
“And bawd-born sainthood virgin but to fall,
“O’er crags of counter-hate and templed creeds
“Pinnacled in mist with jutting altar-place
“Shrunk from the scurvèd noon of man’s
content,—
“Aye, thus Day greets thee sovereign till the
trump
“Of Chaos and reversal void. Thus greets;
“And from that profound Charter-court of
Time,
“Hath borne the sun with all his incense fierce
“To lamp our homage worshipful to thee,
“Beseeching thee a morrow! Hear our prayer,
“O chiefest Unapproachable of eld!—
“Thou major Might of the Olympian strong—
“Yea, hear their prayer, and let Creation still
“Beard back ambitious Chaos, and be glad
“In all her azure seasons of emprise!”

So sang the Arts with multiplying thrill—
These cloud-choired minstrels of ascendant
state—

Up to their Regent signaled Infinite ;
And as he bent his eyes in sweet assent,
Their silver concord melted on the wild
To baby-murmurs and commotion faint,
Echo on echo swooning till the last
Sank back on heaven whence it rose and ruled.
Then unseized of these heraldries of state,
The Truth-god rose as maimed of weariness
Of the long day's blue battling, and threw down
The mitre and red mantle of his state
Athwart his throne with scarce a reverent
glance,
Turning away as if in easement sweet
And solace soothing that the day was done ;
For truth had sat a thousand teemèd hours
With up-poised arm commandant to the stars,
Had ruled and faltered, rose and ruled again,
As rose and fell the throbbing heart of heaven.
And now a time of sweet deliverance
Had come, and with a grateful smile, he kissed
His palms to th' kindly goddess of his weal,
O'erthankful for this couchant interval
Of peace apportioned of serenest ease,
And quiet rest yokeless of Custom's scourge.
E'en from this throne of heaven went he
forth :
E'en from his realm in the wild heart of man—
This Soul's-land where mankind have served
their will

To whim and machination—ventured forth
As one who sought a healing solitude
From his heart's huge turmoils, passing the
arch

Where that omnipotence at stir of morn
Entered, and snatching up the primordial
mace,

Bade virgin Life to live, and Day to be.

Through stalwart nave and star-pavilioned
court,

Through peristyle of porphyry and flint
Misty of incense by the twilight guled,
On through the chancel of more potent gods
Than Pagan knew or Magi, where lay prone
These prophets whose large province 't is their
charge

To batter back th' presuming arms of hell
That tempt the willing, fainting heart of man
With teasing scisms nectared in disguise,
Called by that name which cries: 'There is no
God,

There is no Light, no Truth, no Faith, no Hell.'
On, on, he pressed with trenchant ears damned
up,

Lest some importunate and questioning one
Tear back the bonds that swathed his rankling
heart,

And cry him to the wound. On, on, he strained

Through fairest arcs majestic to the sense,
On to the gates where in the dim beyond
All open-armed of greeting, lay a wood
Necklaced of jasper walls and over-teemed
Of all the sylvan boast of peerest dreams
In osiered coves by god-arts husbanded ;
Lo ! as he raised his eyes the portals swung,
And he passed on and sought his solitude.

The twilight still red-armored to the glooms,
Reluctant sheathed its passion ; but its spell
Still laid upon the opaque brow of dusk
Its fever-finger as to halt it back,
As if repugnant Eve should know no star
To vigil out her season. Th' coward sun
With flaming heels a-rack ran barefoot down
The slanting nave of the out-battled West
To refuge ; and the lorn-eyed Charity—
She of benignant birth, with belted eyes
Like two bowled Saturns plucked from heaven
and hung
From that warm, frownless forehead orbed
and bright—
That quick libation to the God of love—
Was not yet from her search through the pied
vales
Of Georgia centaur-castled, or the heights
Of Oregon for that God-virtual reed
Wherewith to soothe the babe which on this
hour

Should kiss the zenith with all-sentient eyes ;
For there pitched high of sweet expectancy,
The courtly deities assembled were,
Clustered at large 'mid the wide porticos
That skirt the realmèd chambers where that
hour

Science her first-born into peerest weal
Should nurture, and this earth be rent with
glee

In triumph to our blest deliverer
Who from this gallèd rack of Circumstance—
This purplind yoke of Custom, and these wiles
Of sophistry opprobrious to the true,
The pure, regenerate and feelingful,
Should free a curst mankind.

And Poesy,—

Ah, freest, fairest of the sovereign Arts,—
She born of Beauty, with great godly eyes
Looking redemption on the world as through
Two wounds in th' side of Christ,—aye, there
stood she,

Heart all a-flame before the mammoth gates,
Tenting her eyes on the dim horizon
For her late-coming king ; but greeted not,
She sighed as one whom Hope had stubborned
still,

And touched her forehead with a fever-stir,
Wondering. And now as by dint of augury

Propitious to the option of the gods,
The whole compulsive universe was hushed
In sweet suspense bred of a lifting hope,
With tongue still itching for applause, with
eyes

Rapturous of images of him to come ;
And Nature buried from all wry reproach
In the all-eared expectancy that made
This Spring-tide zone a double feast of love.

Deep-thoughted in his forest hermitage,
Alien to all the pomps of his estate
Seized of this Titan mutiny, estranged
E'en from his brazen-armored outer Self,
The Truth-god knelt him on his mantle spread
For but one kind communion with his soul—
One boastless self-confession. Lo! there hning
Mid-realmed of th' eaving twilight the wild
weirds

That forced e'en the inanimate to think ;
And all the broad-browed universe seemed
hushed

In some sweet seeking, pouring faith-wise on
The dim pale phantasies of the staid god
A diligence divine. Pillowing there
His heaven-transcending eyes, he poured aloft
The void god-oracled the full and rich
All-golden effluence of his taut soul
Which rose one still oblation, while the rent

Deep at the heart of heaven was dammed up
To list his solemn musings.

Ah, then down
This thrice-rent nave of liegeless Chaos poured
More palpable in all her sable arms,
The ebon Night, hooding the cloistered wood—
This skiey hermitage of seer-browed pines,
And sycamore and monumental oak
As if so many silvan priests ordained
For midnight ministration and deep deeds.
And still the couchant peer sat consecrate
To that space-cleaving trance, nor made light
stir

Upon the milken element to point
Unto the ghouls his shelvèd hiding place.

And there came forth from orphaned realms
beyond,
From widowed sovereignties and alien arcs
Beyond the searching ken of even gods,
From armored stars unborn to th' eyes of men,
Planets where Truth is curst and law unhoused
By anarch arms rebellious to the gods,
And from republics of the human heart—
Fond ministrations eager for the light—
These came, and many more unheralded,
Swift palmers in the guise of phantasy
Sinking into his brain : they of huge deed
Wrought on the mid-arenas of the sun,

Bold Thespians of star-staged theatres
Audienced of th' applauding galaxies,—
Ah, came they all, each of some tragic role
God-membered, knit of brows and pitched of
pride.

And came there too, featured of eldest weal,
The harbingers of palpitating Time
In chronicled demesnes, rebellions fall'n
Parched into penitence by surfeit damned ;
The legends of dispeopled moons, and all
These muniments of azure treasury
Roused from the topmost nave of subject
heaven,

The heritance of era unto era
And greybeard age to age ! These knelt their
scrolls

From the blue archives of the truth of truths :
The history of heaven from the birth
Of headlong Time through all these epochs
linked—

The lineage of each God-attribute,
The ancestries of Change and Death and
Power,

And all the martial Arms and Arts eterne
Which link the sway of Truth in one wide zone.
Aye, these and many more, with bleeding looks
Strained to the tention of their holy mood,
Their grave confessions knelt them as a child
Unto its reverend sponsor. - And there alone,

The silent Truth-god bent, and opened wide
Unto each pilgrim prayer his tented ears
Strained to the warm absorption of that spirit
Which finds in feeling first philosophy,
In arts and culture that refine the soul,
Man's first Messiah living and to be.

How long he lay embalmed of that swift
siege
Of thoughts unutterable, but wood-nymphs
knew,
And they who chronicle the swart-ribbed Hours
Which came upon the night and went again
As hastening from a task that loved them not.
How long in the profoundest laboring out
Of these star-thoughted oracles that e'er
The sylvan realm of Truth could travail forth,
None now shall say ; but on that sunken eve
There was a hand of motherly monition
Staying all busy life in one meek hush,
And not e'en Love's low lulliby was heard
To press the teemèd air. His spirit sank
Deeper and deeper to that alien depth,
Estranged e'en from his omnipresent self,
Remote in that far phantasy from even
The heavens that held him in their cloistered
paims
Childwise on a mother's breast ; and in that
strain

The great-orbed sweats poured laboring adown
His brow majestic and by hard compulsion
Proved to the underlings of earth and sky
That even gods are chief but by their toils,
And heaven one workshop of perfecting truth.
Yea, his huge frame in that celestial moil
Shook with volcanic travail, and 't was sweet—
Ah, sweeter than all the pomp-pursed legacies
Of bounty-giving Era; for therein
Was he thrice proved to his demanding self
A god indeed—more than in name or knave.

Then sudden as a cloud eclipses noon,
There rose a din of voices to the reach
Of that high region—pæans of huge thanks
Half revelry half awe; ah, then a hiss—
A hush—subsidence into hell of all
That boastful trump to heaven, and—silence!
Wherefore?—ye gods. Hark ye! the child is
born—

First heir of Science and all-sovereign Truth—
Him whom the gods had surnamed Faith—
Alas!

To find his godlike nature here unsexed,
His birthright cast in hostage to the fiends,
His head uncrowned and the high prestige
fallen!

Then swept through the blind arcades of her
courts

In search of her grave lord, a matron: she,
Crimsoned to th' beetling brows with traitor
shame—

Science, the mother on that liberal hour
Of Doubt presuming to recoil on heaven,—
He the exalted but to fall; the king
But to be slaved in turn; o'er-flattered knave,
With pompous pouch and lips all spendthrift
smiles,

Aye, Doubt bred of the breast that should
have teemed

A Faith-god on that solemn hour,—aye, Doubt
With eyes like two small windows into hell,
Sun-forged to light the glory of his lord,
Prophet of that high tenure. Forth came she
The mother of that shrunk and milken god—
Out of her jasper-chambered solitude,
Skirted by one meek slave with wildered limbs
Burdened of that high treasure so unprized.
With bolting eyes swoll'n of dissentient tears,
Did she—this rampant sister-spouse of Truth—
Peer searchingly through every maskèd port
And outskirt nave resisting; then took she
The thread of her bowed master's wandering,
Trailing his giant footstep on and on,
Through gallery and inter-clasping aisle,
Through damask naves by dim torch rubied
faint—

Out into the dumb dusk of middle eve,

And rapped upon the gates. The warder leaped
As from a tomb-deep slumber at the sound ;
And forth they swung—those pond'rous seals
to heaven,
And she passed on.

The forest as a rose
Sprung from Hesperides at shut of eve
With petals half impenetrable, stood there ;
And on she plodded with but thankful moan
That the befriending darkness hid her cheek
From the beholding search of silent Truth
Bridging her thus much anguish. Then in
doubt,

Upon the meek sods stood she halt a trice,
And when the echoes of her silver tread
Wasted away like Hope too fragile born,
She called upon the forest's sensuous ear
The name of 'Truth'—that solemn Region's
god !

And yet no answer came ; for he beyond,
Devoured of that all-penetrating reach
Of reason—super-logic of the gods,—
Heard never outward sound, and so dreamt on.
But forward still she ventured, and once more
Lifted her voice upon the mobile air :
'Truth Maximus!—son of Johovah—hail !'
But no ; that amorous wording swooned like
Day

On the black-armored Midnight, and she
moaned.

Then by some augured chance or will elect
She trembled forth noting the riven port,
And obdurate of speech one moment more
Stood liegeless by her great lord's side, and
bowed.

The fever at his temples felt she keen
As closer bent the reverent lips to press
The brow out-heavened by that passion-dream
Surpassing speech of e'en the elder gods,
To trump him from his rhapsody. Ah, all
Of that flood-tided motion of the sea
Beneath his billowy bosom she well knew—
Reading that huge heart's oceanic swell
As 't were an open scripture of the stars.
Then nerved to the calm pitch of her resolve,
She pressed her hot lips to his forehead moist,
Whisp'ring sweet salutations to his soul,
Half-cloaking down her own rebellious mood.
There rent a shudder through that giant
frame,—
A quick pulse that had stirred th' coagulate
milks
Of all the sluggish systems of the gods.
And then by brawn compulsion to the task
The great god snatched his spirit back within
From that all-searchful reach, rising with pain

As from a sepulchre of giant dreams
A thousand years in solid cerements.
Ah, then with tear-washed hands hard-clenched
upon
The emblem of his state, he measured forth
The words that rang their requiems through
heaven,
And stung all quick creation halt with awe :

“This—this the climax of sun-vaulting
Thought—!

The pitch of the inspired—dome of true light !
The apex of ascendance where the god
Relinquishing reason at its end of ends,
Proceeds beyond by faith ! This--this the cap
And crown on Truth's infinitude : the crest
Of potent sky-craft---height of heights ! Oh,
could

My spirit season out the reach of time
O'er this sweet passion-madness ! Oh, to be
Upon that utmost zenith pedestaled
Forever, 'stead of sitting at the breach
Of mysteries throned in the bowels of heaven,
A name, an envy, lord of carrion moons
And wormwood earths dismembered of their
state....

Ah, Science ! what doth prompt thee from thy
hall

At this gloom-spousèd hour ?—”

Then up rose he,

And touched her hand with half impetuous stir
Of mutual love, prying his query still.
But timorous by daunt of fear, she shrank
Stark of her valiance at the mooted edge,
Speechless disarmed. Then he, the hilted king,
Perceiving her clenched to some rack of shame,
Halt of inadequate tongue, spake eager thus:—

“Wherefore shrink’st thou?—Oh Sister-
spouse; the truth!

And if opprobrious that the listening day
Blush on thy secret, break it on the night
Confederate to thy purpose, and ’t is well.”

This sly enforcement worked its will, and by
These wedgihg words struck to her sense again,
That daughter of the mooting centuries
Waved back the mantle from her matron brow
As if ’t were proved impolitic to seal
Its open oracle from the lank shades,
And by this new-taught chivalry, spake thus :

“Son of Jehovah! come thy spouse and child
Greeting....”

“What! Faith?—he who shall bear to all
mankind

The secret by which are the gods made worthy,
The heavens propped up, the heart of man
elect—

The prestige of the pure, the wise, the true,
Sustained? Oh, Faith-child! it is well with
thee...."

Then pressed he forth to seize this firstling-
born
Of Truth and Science in his eager arms ;
But ere avowed, a quick restraining hand
Halted him at the breach, and he stood still,
Marvelling.

"Nay ; not yet, O Truth-god. Stay!
Thy son by some mischance of hell is proven
Unfit to meet thy gaze. Nay, question not ;
Bethink thyself yet childless as to him,
For he is not the worthy of his sire,—
Unmeet the fostering. Thus Science pleads :
That thou be not displeased ; but forthwith
swear

The sun-babe's future to his mother's will,
Relinquishing to her all exercise
Of discourse to the warrant of his state
As she may deem most worthy. Pledge me
this!"

So sank the perfumed poison to the shades,
Rewardless of his smile. With captious eyes
Bestirred to pry the painted secret more,
That paragon of states apporached the slave
That stood beweathered of his boding awe,

And clasped the babe, biddidg the torch be
bent

That he behold and bless. Then bowing low,
He knelt before the child, and eye to eye
Those gods beheld their own. Thus lifting
forth

The index of his state, he murmured low
With every reverent accent of esteem :—

“First-born of Science—she my one soul’s
spouse—

Of opulence God-fostered, co-eterne!
Thus to my heart I yoke thee: hence ordained
The infant Truth, o’er-honored of his sire! . . .

But why, O Mother, dost thou tremble so?—
How now art goad of some irreverent mood
Too passionate for rein? Peace unto thee!
For Truth’s well pleased of Science’ infant son,
Gracing him fit to mate the Attributes
And serve the one all-King. Unbind the babe,
And let him prove the mutual of heaven.
Unbind the young god, slave, and let me look
If all his limbs be stubborned of the oak,
And brow broad-virtued of the wills of heaven
As doth become a scion of the Law.
What hast thou named him, Mother?”

“Named him?—named him? Of his nature
damned—

His godless, creedless, treasonable inbeing :

‘Doubt’ have I named him—Doubt that lifts
to hell

This pure libation he should kiss to thee
O Truth! before whom do the planets kneel—
‘Doubt’ have I named him to his nature true.”

Then came a sigh—a curse—a murmuring,
And the night-fiends dissembled, shadeward
fled.

There rose the huge Olympian, and shook
His gauntlet locks up to the high-noon Fates,
And turned his face starward, murmuring thus:

“Oh fatal augury that plunges me
Into submersion through this reach of joy
And the sweet consecrations of this hope
So grown auspicious to these grief-rheum eyes
For my babe’s sake! What Doubt the son of
Truth—

Doubt the first-born of Science—Doubt the
dog

Whom I have kissed a god in mutual awe,
But to be damned in the rebound. Alas!
Was I born but to brook this stern reproof
Of heaven, and father this wry-featured thing
Throughout the cirque eterne? Alas for me!
Is this the price of truth, O sovereign Jove?—
Is Doubt the meed of Science, Art, and all
These holy aspirations of young Mind

Godward ascendant through these mortal
glooms?
Aye, God forbid !”

Then Science with her frame
Bowed as a gnarlèd oak beneath the yoke
Of shame—unworthy, fiend-enslaven shame—
Fell to the great god’s side, snatching the babe
Into the mazèd air, and shrieked amain :

“Thou beetling issue of the Arm of Light !—
Curt-witted interloper ’twixt this pride
And me !—hence, hence thou art athwart
The hecate universe a fateling cast.
Go ! pry thy refuge from the slaven Earth,
And trespass the dumb Seas to quarter thee—
Thou foster-child of the presuming Shades—
Hence ! thou mal-formed and ominous debauch
Of a sky-mated mother,—seek thy sphere !”

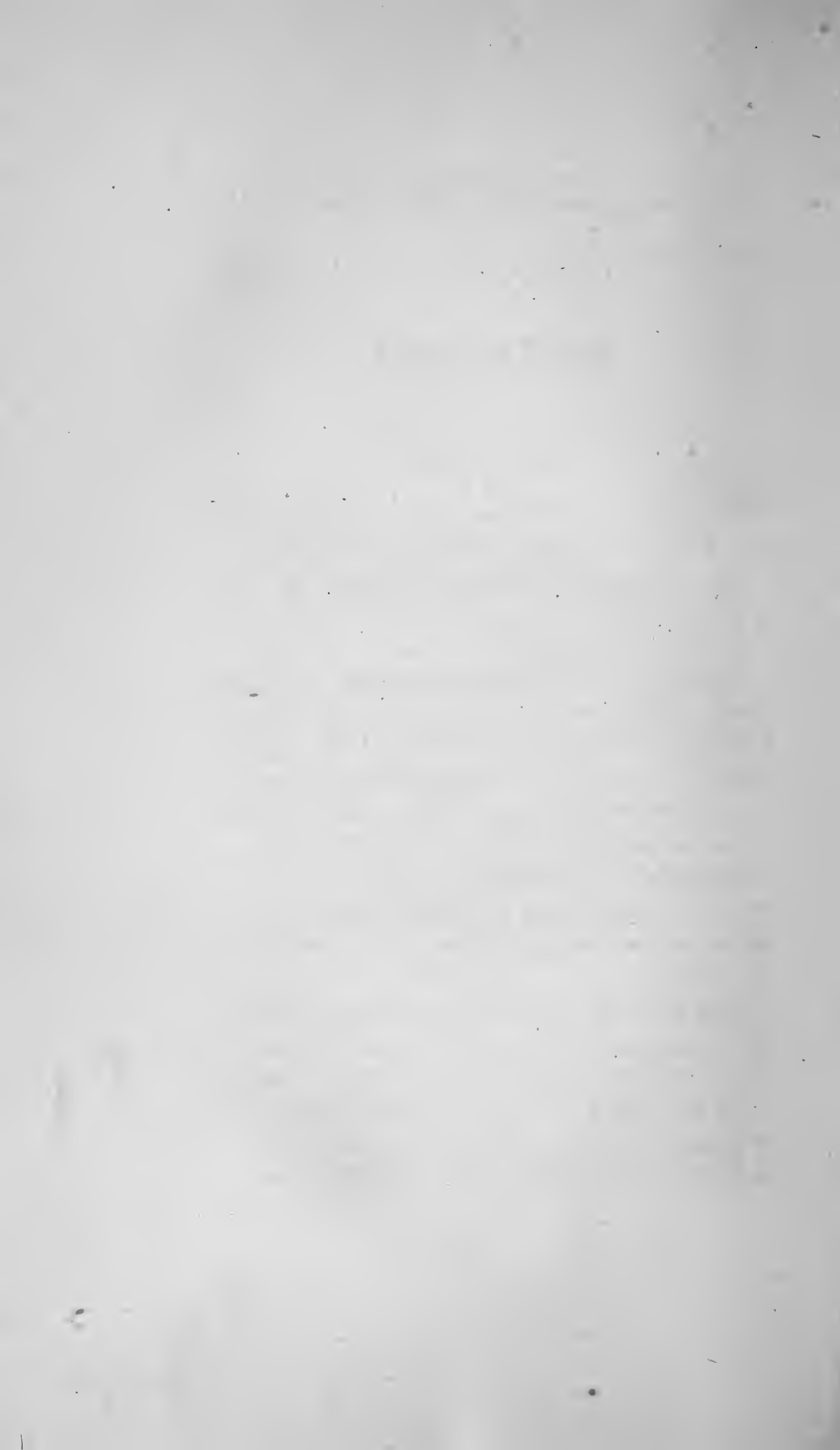
Then with a giant’s task, she paced along :
On till where heaven looks o’er its jutty brim
Down on the austere under-arc of earth—
E’en at the barbless brink remorseless poised
Halting. Then ere the Fate-gods could for-
fend,
She clenched her girdless sun-child by the
loins,
Gathering huge purpose to that milken will,
Hissing through the dumb arc her flaming
curse,

With one herculean plunge that bearded Night,
She wrenched the rebel Doubt from her torn
breast

And flung him forth into the staggered calm
Of speech more dreadful than a wind from
hell,—

Out of her bosom far into the night
Which with all-sealing yawn drank down the
mote

As 't were a meteorite,—a wail—a hiss—
A speck that seemed to stick in th' painted void'
And—nothing !



The Truth-God :

BOOK SECOND.

*The Sea-throne of Sceptia.—Doubt confesses his
Ambition to conquer Heaven.—The Banquet,
and the ascent of the son of Science to con-
quest.*

Throned in her mid-morn temples of the sea,
Deep-aliened from the increate of heaven,
Castled with the dumb regents of the Tides—
Those ocean-shouldering deities, supreme
In all the crafts that snare the weals of men—
There knelt a goddess, by adoption made
The mother of our fallen Thunderbolt—
Doubt, the banished from that seat of reign
Whereon he would have served the hilt of
Truth.

There sate she pedestaled of sea-green state,
Her yearning eyes bent on a far-off chase
Of dreams that dared a pilgrimage to heaven
And brought back homes of beauty and of joy
Wherein to castle the unhoused heart
Reft of its holy faith. Ah, once she drew

A cloak of jewelled sea-reeds o'er her neck,
And bending, pressed her lips most lingeringly
Upon that cheek yet soft with youthfulness,
And wept, yet wherefore, not e'en herself knew.

He slept—this young god of the Thunder-
steed—

Like one of mighty deeds whose valors take
Scarce heed of th' maddest tribute of the gods
To do him honor, so supreme are they.
He slept, and ah, his dream like a devil's dream,
Took shape presuming at the gates of heaven;
And him flung forth as rebel to the truth,
Now flattered him his mother penitent
Would clasp her star-child back into her realm,
And crown him goldenly his seat of reign,—
Doubt, sovereign and Messiah—super-truth
By which alone the heart of man prevails.
And as he dreamt upon his coral couch
By Sceptia's hand woven to tenderest touch,
His bosom fevered, and his trenchant eyes
Sphered with rheum, those battlemented
brows

Fretted like mountain clouds that cap the Alp,
To free young lightning waspish for new war.
But when the goddess watching at his side
Read those hard chronicles which stood dis-
closed

In open scripture on that speaking face,

She shuddered as a mother for her child ;
Nor dared an utterance though full at heart,
So shrunk of passion is the ablest word
To speak the rack of turmoil on the soul.

Hope was a thing abandoned to the fiends
In that sea-hermitage of calm Despair,
O'er-reigning Hate and Sorrow—ministers
Of her the unbelieving—for sun-sired Faith
Was here but a harlot neutral, and the Arts
And arms of all the soul doth cherish so
As moving godwise the great heart of man,
Descended to the abject of a curse,
A mockery, a shame. But one thing lived
And drank its breath of life from the Unknown,
Serving a prop to these dead temples, and
With swathing clouds wrapping the heart of
man

With aught forfending his self-bred despair:
And that was Sufferance. No faith was there ;
Not so much trust in that eterne To-be
Which lifts forth from the deeps of mortal moil,
As dries one tear to vapor. Not so much
Of God as would e'en tempt a starving breast
To bear it to the warmth of the North Star
For solace. Aye, Death lived not ; neither Life,
Nor Hope, nor promise, nor the faith of saints ;
But stoic-bosomed Resignation bore
All there was semblance to a God of love.

Christ was a myth ; the creeds were all unsexed—

Disjunctioned peacemeal with their gospel members

Uncrucified, yet doomed to certain fall:

Serving the champing-cud of scoffing things
That cry to heaven that which the heart contemns,

Teasing to hell that which the gods applaud.

Such was the throne of Sceptia : the first

The last of all mankind's philosophers.

Resuming thence her early attitude,
The mobile goddess shrank into the depths ;
And with a questioning sigh, a sign she made
To the attendant sea-sprites, and alone,
With brow dissembled of its shaken poise,
Watched long and keen with tenderest earnestness

For that young god's recoiling spirit.

Yet,

It came not back from its impassioned trance,

And she grew jealous of his very dreams.

The brazen Noon with moulted wing flung down

Her fiery mantle o'er the captious wave,

Piercing it to the pillars of the sea ;

Down, down athwart this mountain-bosomed couch

Through the wedged arc of Sceptia's domain,
Domed by its watery heaven of purple waves,
It came as on a pilgrimage, and sought
This lorn-browed hermit at her sunken shrine
Prostrate half-anguished as a sacrifice
To that exalted eminence. On high,
From the transparent prism of the noon,
Hung stalactites of sea-brine jewels made
When breathed on by the nymphs, all chan-
deliered

With hues that held their beauty with a pang
Of over-strained luxury, and thus
From these celestial lamps flung through the
deeps

That wizard halo wooing Beauty o'er
Till all the void waxed green by sweet disease
Of jealousy e'en of the gods' applause.

Before her in a purpled incense hid,
Her altars rose like an ethereal moon
Risen on hell out of some black Unknown—
Rose and amazed stood, as half ashamed
To trespass on such stately hearth with bald
And naked front barbaric; but when fell
The incense that enmantled it, that shame
Was changed into an unction of the soul,
Darkling with weirdest glammers and sad
spells

The reach of th' craven void. There sate she
bowed—

This oracle God-hilted of the sphere
Zoned of the billows, undismayed by Time,
Or any sovereignty of griefless Ind,
Or Occident of all unravished orbs
In her austere prerogative of gloom ;
Brow like a pale-brown cloud that sits aloft
Some haughty crag ; chin like a temple-base
With hugest step whereon a god might mount
To th' portal-eyes ; with pallid lids that fell
Upon her still, half-clenchèd eyes like cold
And dampen cerements that wrap the dead ;
And parted lips as if the yawn beyond
Wherein sweet guile mothered its siren speech,
Had proven many a hero's hell. Her hair,
Curtaining with wreathing gossamers of gold
Those shoulders marmorial as the fleckless
noon,
Blush-misted of immortal youth and fair—
Hung like a galaxy of shooting stars
Pendant from heaven by their fiery tails ;
While on her knees the trident stood command
As if some sky-god snatched a meteor
From out the cratered sun in sacrifice
To so much empire, and with reverend grace
Had laid it there. Her signal robe of state
Was woven of pied and vermeil reeds which
once
Were the Jove's lightnings flung from heaven
down

To lash the rebel waves, and there were
changed

Into these phosphor threads she gathered up
To fashion into garment. Thus sate she
All-motionless as her pale-orbed domain :
A link 'twixt two wide-wedged eternities,—
A bride, but even so in widowhood,
Crushing the pallid hues that came and went
Like light snows fallen on the hectic leaf
In autumn-tide, melting as rose the sun.

She bit her lip in anguish—this bent seer
Of thoughts that held speech an abhorrent
thing

Of profanation to its heat—aye, bit
The purple crescent till it shone blood-red,
And like a hornèd moon it seemed to pierce
Th' alarm-cloud that hung 'twixt that search-
ing feature

And him it gazed on with confessing eyes,
Who lay dream-pillowed at her very feet
As some tired palmer from the nadir seas.
Ah me! what silence full of oracles
Was that. She loved him; but that love
poured out

Its feasting attribute through the one port
By which her nature ruled the sons of men :
She loved him but to doubt him; and where
love

Most reinless ravaged, there made doubt its
home,

Its province, hot-bed, and its hell. She rose,
Ah, then drew back, and bound her mocking
lids,

List'ning that gallèd breath with chaffed con-
tent.

The young god's spirit pilgrimed back again
From that far reach of aery humors capped,
Back from that dream-sired cynosure of heaven
And took up calm abode on those warm eyes;
So slowly waking with an easeless quiver
About that stubborn mouth, and crossing
sweats

Upon that forehead ribbed of titan zeal,
He half arose and clenched those iron palms,
Bearding most bold the unpropitious deeps
With thunderbolt on thunderbolt that lashed
The coward whiles into submission tame.
Thus spake the Doubt-god, and the riot fiends
At sport o'er human frailty, gave ear :

“Ye Hours that rise into swart dynasties,
Each chief by birthright!—ye of kingliest bane
The sole compounders!--I do pity ye
Of such lame reason mothered, and so sired
Of still-born weal, and triumph that the dogs
Of downfall addle with their nightly spume!--
Oh bubble casuistry the purjured gods

Resolve men's deeds upon ! this is the state
That marks the signal epochs wherein Earth
Lies reinless of her self-ambitioned chase
For that which long hath proved but a mad-
man's myth,—

That God is, and the soul of man immortal.
This is the state that marks the fall of Faith
To Erebus ; the rise into the heaven
Of Selfdom the ascendant man ! Could we
But bribe the heavens to question, the heavens
Would fall. A single itching doubt will mutine
In th' trunks of even gods and there unhouse
A whole republic of the sovereign truth.
I must to heaven ; 't is late. I must to heaven
And topple the fair womb that gave me birth.
Science !—O Science ! art thou not still my
mother ?

Am I not still thy first-born and thy heir ?
Wherefore didst cast me wanton to the fiends
A fateling on the charities of men,
Forsooth that thou wouldst please thy tyrant
God

With some sick minion with ethereal eyes
And womanish members and a silken will
'Stead of a Titan with grip of flint
That could the belted Neptune wrench peace-
meal

From his blue sockets, tossing him to hell.
Oh who shall shall mete the power of a doubt

To put the stars in swaddling-rags ; to blur
The bloated sun and lash his craven neck
Down through the farthest deeps of nadir night
And serve some star a menial satellite ;
To paint with glooms the festering face of
noon ;

Dampen the heart of man with sackcloths dipt
In teasing hemlock ; strike from th' face of
Truth

That smile benignant, his high prestige thief,
And with its capable grip, rise forth and start
The whole red universe on a mad chase
Back to the primal hearthstone of all time,
And Anarch reign once more. Alas for me!
What wonders 'passing all conceived of Gods
Or men would come all-sovereignly to pass
If but a Doubt ruled heaven."

So spake the mood
Of this young-hearted mutineer given o'er
To counterplot against the matron will
That proved him traitor to the arm of Truth.
Then gathering to his sense the far-off reach
Of rhapsody, he turned and there beheld
His sponsor at his side ; and over-awed
One quickened moment by her burning look,
Outstretched his palm, and spake :

"Sweet Mother mine!

Since she who nursed me puny-proof to fate—
I had a dream, which, by the absolute
And paramount decrees, I am adjudged
Meet my great mother's audience. And now
By all the oaths of the resolvèd gods,
I would lay manifest most reverently
My fealty propitious to thy palms,
Command the quickened depths of ocean
quake

With all-devout humility, and pour
Their prayers to thunders adequate. Sweet
friend

If I have grown to weave about thy soul
A castle of content of love-reeds thatched,
Invisible yet all-enduring, and
Within this sanctuary housed my heart,
'T is but to do thee honor, and regain
For thy fair sake the empire of my due.
Aye, though I go, my heart shall here abide
To do thee service at thy menial nod
And beck ; and all my prostrate, suppliant soul
Thus metamorphosed to holy censer,
Swing up to heaven the perfume of thy love.
Dost thou believe?"

A moment's pause fell there ;
And the chilled season of her brooding passed
With those peer pleadings, Sceptia dashed
aside

The plumèd haught of her dissembling state,
And stood trumped at his feet. Lifting then
A voice half venturing on that giant's task
To free immortal love through woman's lips
When gods stand halt of language, thus spake
she,
And all earth knelt respect :—

“Great son of Truth
And that resistless matron of the breach
Betwixt the parted stars! I greet thy words—
Ah, why need I dissemble?—why but yield,
And turn my heart to things all-tangible
Unto thy kissing trust? O gentlest youth!
I bore thee from the billows where from heaven
Thy puny bulk was cast a fateling dice,
To sink or swim, so curse or honor God.
Yea, with a reason in this madness mine,
I caught thy mother's hostage unto hell
Ere it scarce slipped the verge; and that was
thou.

I nursed thee as my own. I bred thy bones
The marrow of omnipotence; I strung
Thy veins taut with a god's desire till each,
Like harp-strings whereupon the passions
played,
Flung forth a siren music; aye, I teemed
Thy young Ambitions on the predal wine
Of that black grape that trellises the walls

Of fiend-most hell,—and all, alas for me!
Even in the warm mid-zenith of my love—
Now in the godmost ardors of my zeal;
Thou hast a dream—a mad, mal-visioned dream
Full of the properties of headlong youth
By which e'en gods have fall'n,—a dream of
myth
Flattered all tangible to youthful eyes—
A dream of empire, of some fever-fit
Conditioned, yet so plausible withal
That I turn rebel 'gainst my own love-rite,—
Robbing the altars whereon I have laid
Myself in hostage thine. Speak thou to me;
Wouldst thus to leave me widowed as the
night
And wear as Stygean veils?"

The young Doubt-god
Drew down his fretful forehead fold on fold
Of wrinkled eloquence, and dared a voice;
But words—they swooned upon his stricken
lip,
Melting thus stillborn into sighs. Then bowed
With stubborn stare all motionless of state,
With twisted palms, and steel-cold eyes that
shone
Like two white nails sunk in a coward's coffin,
He sat. A sea-nymph from the whiles beyond,
Came forth, and with a hand inviolate,

Proffered him a cup which shudderingly
Rattled upon his parted teeth, as then
With one swift draught the flagon wineless fell
With fragile crash upon the beryl floors.
Then with a word that fell a thousand leagues
Short of the thought's ambition, he spake soft,
Dareless of lifted eyes :—

“Thou talk'st of love,
And love that makes e'en children of the gods,
Makes e'en a babe of me ; disarming so
This adamant yoke that I am halt—
Thieved even of my birth-right attribute
By which the blush of fevering gratitude
Is far out-tempered of its judgment calm.
Speak not of love, O guardian Goddess, nay ;
The universe is schooled in thy love-ethics,
And with the least of mortals, so am I.
My heart, far out its iron element,
Throbs thy warm creed of love, and all is
thine.

But think how far dismembered from my state
This propless, hiltless arm estrangèd lies !
Think—think how craven base in me to sleep
The flabby slumber of the opium-dog,
And see these taut ambitions suckle hopes
The hounds of Custom make dear play-
things of !

Words cowardize this will to cope with gods ;

Only the deed can prove it up to heaven.
Thus let me wordless dream ; and when the
hour
Is ripe, then let a giant's deed take up
The staff of th' giant's fallen dream, and do !”

So spake the Doubt-god ; and the leaguèd volt
Of empire fell athwart that thunder-zone,
Till all the deeps were hushed. Then without
once
Relinquishing the theme, he ventured on,
Thus half belying the resolvèd mood :—

“Think of my birth and all it must redeem
Before the just expectancies of Time
Which yet shall see this curdling pap of
heaven
Called ‘faith’ out-ridden to the scorns of hell,
By just rebellion ’gainst this scurvèd state,
And Him who brought it forth and now would
force

Poor trodden-hearted mortal to redeem
His blunders—ah, think thou of all the task
Imposed upon this mind by naked hand
Of heaven’s most indurate ! Oh tell me then,
By all the principals that point the stars
To their empyreal freedoms, must I sleep
The orbits of so great a planet through,—
Abide my menial picket as a moon

That steals light but to fling it as a curse
Down on some darkling, ghashing mortals'
earth,
And list their childish thanks? Oh, say not so;
But by the orb compound upon thy soul
The antidote for such a passion's bane,
And let me free my mission!"

This spake he

As one who rose from some carnationed urn
Brimmed of the sweats of Titans in their moil
To wedge a world to orbit; then reclined
With naked shoulders on a sea-moss pillow,
Breathing like Centaur from a season's chase.
Meanwhile the deeps so stunned of the brawn
throb
Of this o'er-passioned speech, seemed gather-
ing up
Their fragments in alarm; while too, there rose
From out the mouthèd shells girting this
shrine,
A minstrelsy of timid venturing,
Such as might traquillize too arduous stir
Upon the heart of Sceptia. Then rose
That solemn presence from her coral throne,
And glided sisterly his armored side,
Pressing her fingers to his hollow cheek
In yearning admonition. Then gave o'er
That matron problem that had weighed her so;

And with an impulse swift as was the check
A moment gone, to search his own conceit,
And foster pride e'en in a gorgon's throat,
She spake with measured majesty :—

“'T is well ;

How dare I fell a forest in the rift
Betwixt thee and thy heaven, to tease thy wit
And counter thine ambition? Shame 'pon me,
That I so leagued my love to rend thy path
With chasms thou canst span not, but to be
The sole embalmer of thy thought and deed
Which are to me my immortality.
Go, Monarch of the armories of Jove !—
Traduce the elements till they out-armed,
Minion thy majesty ! **Go**, while thine eyes
Dilate to conquest ; go, dam up the rent
Made by thy soul's dethronement infamous,
And let the harlot Circumstance that felled
Thy temple to the fiends, now champ the lash,
Wincing down to the socket. Empire thine !
The top of skiey state—the apex chief
Of all sun-pillared capitols of space !—
These seat in the prefigurement ; while all
This under-weaned malignance of the shades,
And Earth and all her warring creeds of faiths
And faction, and the prophets of mankind,—
Give hostages of golden augury
Unto thy precedence. On, Doubt !—on, on,

And rib the universe with thy right arm,
Till suns turn allies, and yon grave star-seers
Stand shoulder to shoulder panoplied in war
To wrench a port atween the ribs of heaven
And pry thee in. Yet shalt thou rule the
main—

Thou First, thou Last, thou All supremely
armed

By precedent, by nature, and by zeal
Upon my trust and love still shalt thou rule—
Yet shall a doubt rule heaven !”

So sank her words from that eruptive throat
Down through the mindless oratories caved
In the mid-oceans-bulks that know no sun.
Then took she motherly in her warm palms
The young god's fingers ; and with heart
revealed,

Pressed them unto her lips devotional
Till love grew numb with love reciprocate.
Then knelt she,—ah, weird Priestess of the
sea—

Before her new-found altar, and laid bare
Her bosom like a sea of phosphor pearl,
Unravished yet of human touch, sinking
His face upon her breast at 't were a pyx
To shield her from reversal fates. Then he,
Recovered of spirit to that calm refrain,
Spake soothestly :—

“O Mother!—the elect
Of all my spirit sovereign by thy love—
Since that pomp-pedestaled debauch of heaven
Which did beget so halt a brute as I,
Forswore the common pity of a snake
For her own jeopardized—wake from thy
dreams!
Lift—lift thy realmèd look, O Queen! and
take
My weal to heart more consecrate to reason
Than thus to serve thy prostrate passion’s will!
Lift up thy second,—thy profounder self
Above this green-sick hour; those futures play
To an immortal seeing of Love’s self,
And treasuring its truth as second God!....”

Up from the huge o’er-jutty chancel base
Of that wide deep-sea sanctuary, came
Those priestesses of Sceptia’s sea-court,
To trim the tapers, and make ready all
The feasts of parting and the vigils’ rite
Wherein the prophets their rich off’rings lay
With pæans swept felicitously low.
And now a daughter of the Ocean-seer,
A conch-eyed maiden, stirred with civil step
From the young Doubt-god’s presence, and
was lost
To his beleaguered eyes in the mid maze
Of labyrinthine columns shouldering up

The sovereign sea, e'en as the yoked Atlantes
Prop the blue eaves of heaven. Then he bowed
Upon a rubied ottoman, throwing down
His languid frock like some pale-twilight cloud
Cameleon-hued in ripest summer tints—
Down on his sober brow's horizon wide,
Clenching his lids from every allied sight,
Braving the peer-most reach of flattering hope
In all the gods' imaginings.

Still, still

He sat, cloaking his staid heaven-driving eyes,
Like fiend a-quiver with some parched remorse

Wordless and tongueless save the eloquence
Of crampen sweats and sinews taut with strain.
And now those tremblings ceased; and meek
of eye,

He half uprose and crossed his fettered cheek
With an uhbolting sign, and forth there came
As from some troublous deep beneath his
heart,

Those captive oracles with shame-eyed miens
As if their dignity was stung to wrath
By such rewardless thraldom. Long he paused
With livid lip all haughty turbulence,
And eyes dilate with gloating some sky-prize.
Then fierce that young frame grew; and forth
like fire

From Ætna's clamorous broil, the arrowy
words

Sprang to the throat of the unthinking silence,
Moving the quick mood thus :—

“Ye churl-sired Hours!—

By rankling shames so seasoned since that
morn

This mal-apportioned fall made dog of me,
And on this wrath nursed scorpions, to bait
And nettle it into barbaric heat !

Down, down! thou twin-born rudiment of
hell—

Thou voice of babe-betrayal—down ! and let
My secret pry apart the ribs of heaven,
Mutine that void celestial, and upon
The carrion heaps of conquered gods and
kings,

Castle my pride, and so proclaim Doubt
Truth !....

Let cowards rhapsodize. Deeds be my boast—
Not dreams; the eloquence of action—not
The uncreated vision, be my heaven !

O ye poor underlings of sweet conceit—
Pale negatives of Nature—ye dream-fags!
Triumph sits blushing on thy Godward lids,
Sighing to make thee confidants if but
The soldier's heroism here supplant
The dreamer's dream; for, ah me ! what is hell
But dreams unrealized !”

So sank that voice
With rebel hiss on the supporting calm,
So stifling up all ears to alien noise.
Then sat he long with face all crimson-barred
And lips a-quiver, heeding not that she,
His mother by her charities ordained,—
The pearl-embowered Sceptia, stood near,
Watching with ardent eye her child-lover
Whom she had cradled into peerest things
Her fond co-autocrat. Then as there fell
From his impulsive front a jewelled crest
Cyphered of strangest import, he upturned
His lustrous eyes and there beheld his queen
With smile that well would grace the maiden
Morn
From her carnationed lips at bud of day.
Then without words she took his clenching
palm
And drew him onward as a truant child,
Over the jasper lengths of limpid floors,
He with a stubborn step and heart ill-eased
To bait his spirit from its madness back,
Snailing most mincingly,—on, on apace,
Down 'tween these columns ancient as the sea,
Writhing as one of savage secrets warped
Beyond all recognition. There they paused
Ere venturing upon that banquet heartli
Where sat festivity in waiting, crowned
Propitious to the brows. E'en at her side

Wordless the dream-seized god stood pondering,

Just where he pressed the tiger's effigy
Locked in the grim mosaic. Sceptia then
With equal grace her quiet finger laid
Upon that brow with crossing wrinkles whet
Beyond his callow years, and cheerly spake,
Admonishing:—

“O Prince! repair thy zeal;
Leave off this signal lust for empire 'mid
These rash impossibles to youthful arms;
For thou beard'st even now the keeps of joys,
Where the most festal and conspiring throng
To mirth await thee. Come; lift up these
locks

From their uneasy gloom-offended brow!
What! hear'st not even now the awkward din
For thy slow coming? Do not the gods ache
To grasp good will the Doubt-god's open
palm?

On, Son of Truth! on, on to feast. Unpoise
This mammoth frown that cramps thy fore-
head so;

Come; wilt thou be of them an equal cheer
In these o'er-flattering revels?”

“Let me try;
And if I fail to follow on the heels
Of these their honors with a giant deed

To mate each gracing cup, then Chaos take
These coward loins to task, and make a clay
Of this fall'n immortality. So be it!"

Thus

With accents chivalrous clinging his lip,
He tossed his mantle with a taunting stroke
About his form defiant, and bent forth
Upon the captious task—entering.

Oh freest phantasy of eastern muse
All meteor-yoked to grasp the capable hilt
Of willing eloquence! where is thy word?
How now is speech in surfeit awe halt bound,
And honest voicing to that able mood
Shrunk to the licence of the merest mote—
Dumb, beholding there what these gods be-
held!

Lo! in the ruddy midst of all, there stood
Pavilioned by an arch of gleaming pearl,
The banquet tables of these Ocean-gods
Met in this capitol of courtesy
Laden with such vast favor of the gardens
That bed the seas and cap their saffron heights
That Doubt encompassed stood thus to behold
And feast the rapturous dish. On, on he crept,
While Sceptia took his hand bidding him haste
Into that wild assemblage, and grace back
The gallantries of the applauding host.

There Query sat with super-bounden eyes ;
And by her Pessimus, her love and brother,
With visage faithful to the oracle,
And attitude commanding. Then Sophism,
Bearded of ancient cut, yet with the times
Most consonant ; he the gripping seer
With eyes in every pore that speak opinion
E'en in the face of heaven. Then further on,
Sat Cant with spangled locks tieria-like
Domed sovereignly upon that milk-warm brow,
Leaning on shepherd's staff that half the world
Have kissed and sworn allegiance. Then came
The Vanities, full of heart-qaking dreams ;
Those daughters fair of sunlight and of shadow,
Of grief and folly over-chastened thrice,
Queen each of some imperial vantage-place
Upon the willing heart of man wherein
Sly-castled they discoursed the public man
To deeds intemperate. Then Reason, sire
Of the unrefuged Wonder houseless still
As any beardless satellite, him set
By crampen heel e'en in the joy-most place,
With eyes that fed on marvels as each jest
Were mettled of some browed philosophy.
Then Pretence, mantled of some lithest robe
Torn from a serpent's back ; Rebellion, too,
Of rugged jaw and lineament of war,
Looking invasion in the yawn of hell.
And many, many more—all swallowed up

In this huge riot of convivial grace,
With laughs, and cheers, and groans, as moved
to voice

The madness of their mood, themselves un-
heard

E'en by their listening selves. Oh, what a vast
And venerable assemblage was here met,—

Joy-wanton dignities of every clime,
And outer-province of the heart of man,
Gathered to lay their amorous salutes
In young Doubt's lap, and cheer the roused
god

In his new-found resolve. Then sate he
there,

A giant in the peermost midst of such,
Brimmed of conceits in purpose till they swore
Their heavy moils on his reliant arms,
Fevering the heart as with a wine run red
From Ætna's moulted arteries a-flame.

And soon, too, at the hope of Sceptia's love,
That frown of over-thought and mien of war
Forsook the youngling aspect ; and instead,
There knelt before his vision dreams of tri-
umph

And sanguine auspices he dreamt far, far
Estranged from such a martyrdom of pride—
From such a pillory of culprit Hours,
And Aspirations dragging fiery chains
Down, down his gallèd temples.

Ah, then forth
From depths enmazed in smokes of revelry
And pomp of perfumed censers-shells, there
came

The sea-slaves of th' Atlantian gods, bent down
By weight of one huge pearl-engirdled urn
Brimmed rash to th' quivering ledge with revelry

In ruby mask. This, when the 'plauding din
Had died, they set in their beholden midst
Upon a porphyry casket opal-zoned
And spiced with a precious union, dipping
therefrom

The liquid levity that ran their veins
With hot Elysium, transporting them
Into the flatt'ring reach where greater gods
Than these would named themselves out-
heavened far.

Then through the din multiloquence, there
rose

A god--a stranger in their mammoth midst—
Custom, a waning deity with yet
A feature of its matron curse unscathed
From that familiar forehead, yet a king
To millions,—rose he struggling up, and with
His flagon reeling on th' commandant air,
Drew down a calm much as a nymph of night
With mantle dun folds o'er the sun's red look
And heralds th' calm of eve, and thus his
words

Took sceptre on the anarch din :—

“Sweet friends!—

Creators even of Creation's self—

Ye chaos-seekers whom your lineage

Proves to the matron universe a will

By godlike workmanship from void upheaved

Into triumphant noon!—ye gods of high

And sure possession in the light of Thought!

Oh say with me this is no empty hour

By Failure bred the age's malady,

But open in its health, and super-bound

To high fulfilment in the face of Law.

O Doubt-god! our young Doubt-god!—palm-
er made

By such a feasting of auspicious cheer,

Full worthy the most sovereign eminence

Throned on the heart of man! Oh art thou
now

Full armed upon thy zeal to overmatch

The peerest import of the wield of heaven,

And so not earth alone, but every star

That touches cups to heaven and to Truth,

And every sun that wags a fiery tongue

Down the dumb oratories of intestine night

Discoursing golden homily,—all, all

Bow down and take thus to the fawning lip

Thy flaming garment's hem, and cry thee God?

And art thou now full armed to conquer down

The war-gods of all space who adamant
Their armors with the attributes of Power
And precedent thou dream'st not of, and there
Strike flinted suns to flame, and girdle up
Ten thousand earths into one Milky Way?
Come ; hast thou pondered in the valid pitch
Of thy madcap emprise, the awful task?
Speak, speak, O Doubt-god. Lo! the vital air
Is all a-hungered for thy voice...."

He paused
For quick reply ; but ah, how far mistook
The queried council the rich dignity
Of such a stalwart mind which grappled heat
By labor, but when once enkindled, fierce
In its volcanic fervor and resolve.
Then grew the silence ponderous ; and slow
The travail of that mind to fill the gap
Upon his heart with gracing utterance,
Prevailed ; and he arose all-apt and free
As from a sepulcher of his dead self,
A new-born parent of a new-born will,
And emulation multiplied in hope
And daring dauntless. All concentrating eyes
Scanned that fair face for the betrayal blush ;
But all was mystery unfathomed yet
By even her who knew him, and she wept.
Then back he waved a pace, his potent length
Towering Colossus-matched, and put to shame

The image yon of Delphian Apollo
By grave repute ; and with half-stanchèd
 blush,
Gazed wordless on their upturned faces all.

The oracles that tongueless teased his heart
To worthy utterance wrote on his brows
Their solemn purport ; and when such was
 read
By all the peers of that rich lineage,
There rose a din of plaudits that made quake
The earless naves of that sub-ocean realm,
Pouring a conscious courage from the deeps
Of thrice ten thousand unrestrainèd wills
Into that sad soul's urn, and brewed therein
A potion of rare poise.

Then soldier-like,
Down from his beetling shoulders fell the
 cloak
That bore the wizard craft of Sceptia,
Which as her benediction she had thrown
Athwart his giant front awhile he slept ;
And with a leopard-eyed resolve, and voice
Like some lone Titan by his family
Of angel-fallen round the hearth of hell,
Spake forth with martial tongue :—

“ Ye proven slaves
To over-faith in this reluctant arm !

Ye are too gravely schooled in honesties
To spur me down into the yawn of fate
Defeated. But behold—ye argus-eyed!
Pierce ye that thin transparency that kisses
The hem of heaven, and swings a bulwark
staid

'Twixt gloating Earth and the Olympian arc?
Oh see ye not crouched by the border-realms
Of that unbearded State, a meteor-thing
Upwaging through the serene films of dawn
To some apt end? Ah, Prophets! know ye
not

That certain warrior-armored, godlike thing
Is my aspiring spirit? Hail it, gods!
Hail it with kiss of cheer, else fall it must!
Say ye with paltroon cattle of the earth,
Mine is a lower circle? Say with men,
He is no more than mortal, and for shame?
Was I but fashioned for a bootless king
Of but a slavish world? Oh, say not so;
Lo! I was cast out of the clenched gates
Where yet a son shall knock with dauntless
dare,

Demanding quarter none shall dare deny,
In two-fold penance for so edged a deed.
Snatch back thy heaven, thou Soul of purple
ire

Bent hoar by such indignities! Sweet gods!
By all the regent stars: now fare ye well.

When I shall conquer Heaven as I have Earth,
And doubt of its God rules the wide universe,
Count ye a claim co-equal with my triumph,
A synod of the all-compelling Arm—
Gods by first chiefdom. Hence am I un-
bound !'

So saying, he bent down and reverently
Took Sceptia in his arms and gave her one
Wild look that made the stunned assembly
stare ;

Yet she interpreted as flooding full
The coffers of her love with gratitude,
Doing for her sweet honor these strange deeds.
Then while applause sat lingering at each lip,
Embalming the swift speech immortally,
With up-poised arms he strode from the vast
throng

Followed of panting eyes and wildered shrieks
All mingling doubts and darings. Out he sped
Into the pulseless marrows of the sea,
Fearless as sightless in the arc of night,
Mounting his sea-steeds flame-caparisoned
Yoked twain with girds of sea-nymphs' tresses
woven,

With riot-breathing throats and lightning
manes

Trailing like meteors through the crouching
calm.

Then leaning forward as to beard his task
With iron stubborned volt, he uttered shriek
That stunned the solid night, then upward
plunged—

Up, up through the unclenched, unravished
deep.

A phosphor wake from his hard-sunken spurs
Flashed through the curdling element, and lo!
From his beleaguered watchers he waged on
Like an aspiring comet through the gates
Of heaven stealing with a fire-brand
To wring foul mischief at that seat of Power,
A spectre of the gods—a flash—a hush—
Gone!

The Truth-God :

BOOK THIRD.

The Truth-God at variance with his subject realm.—Science attempts to appease him; but in vain.—He threatens, and finally attempts, to cast her from her Throne to Earth; but at the verge is halted by the advent of her first-born.—The final fall of Doubt.

Morn, like a benignant vestal's veil, fell soft
Upon the brow of Truth who stood apart
From all the turmoils of his solemn court,
Conjuring the affianced stars to speed
Their daily off'rings to their regent god
By the auspicious Day. But though he plead
Upon the rebel clouds about his crown,
Which rose from censers goldenly and bore
His prayers in chariots argentine through
space,
The wry stars passive stood as half disloyal
To their high regent, neutral to his hest,
And not one subject law but led revolt

Full in the teeth of the preponderant god,
And trumped the Powers 'gainst their resolvèd
liege.

It seemed the universe had taken arms
Against its Sovereign, hounded by some spell
Of doubt and damned rebellion, as, mayhap,
Grown weary of this captious servitude
To heaven. In vain as he the Truth-god stood
E'en at the open port commandant still,
He struck his clenched and obdurate right arm
Upon the rebel elements, and heard
His plead caressing and his thunder-curse
Alike repulsed with muttering mutiny
Which augured ill for the up-dawning Day.
In vain he ope'd his eyes upon the browed
And gaping heavens with most incautious ire,
And rashly whipped a volt of lightning lash
Athwart its naked front, and saw, alas!
A rainbow of most hell-soothsaying hues
Blood-tinct and hideous, frowning like fiend
Defiant through prison-bars. The very light
Of day seemed poisoned of some mammoth
curse,
Stung to the vitals by some scorpion spell
Slunk out of Hades to rile up the cup
Of gracing heaven and turn its wine to gall.
The very marrows of wrath-seizing space
Broiled with brood-red indignity, and all
The comet-cloven areas of Time

Were dungeoned up in spleens that none mis-
took,
And none—not even he their monitor—
Dared trifle or impugn. O martyred Hours!
When all celestial law breeds mutiny
'Gainst their pride-stubborned and despotic
chief,
And the swart veins of that imperial brow
Stood coursing over frown and furrow like
Red serpents fanged with hatred to the brim
And maledictive aching for revenge
For that unquestioned deed of infamy
Wrung on the palms of the defaulting First.

He stood—this lord cribbed of his reinless
wrath
Embalmed in th' midnight of embittered
spleen,
Even a child in impotence of ire—
A babe 'midst all these serfdom principles
Whose kiss stung of the gall on his hot cheek,
Who hissed their hymns perforce of th' dogged
lash.
With eyes upon the zenith taut he stood,
Charging the whiles to problem out the why
Of this mad, most irreverent revolt;
But even these whom he had honored, turned
Denying from his face, and all the more
He pierced with keen conviction the blue orbs

That brazen-featured of reproach bent down
Defiance deep into his swollen sockets,
The more his caustic glance was met full-
armed
Of dragon ire whipped itchingly for war.
Thus stood the Truth-god with half-wilderer
frame
Bowed down, forsooth, as if one great as he
Might know the grief that curst ingratitude
Wrings on the generous heart; as if, indeed,
The god immortal with the mortal man
Oft' touch their cups to Sadness. Thus he
stood,
With baffled shame on his insulted pride
Pricking deep wounds; and thus he set his
teeth
Like leopard meditating mischief high,
Choked back the curse that would, and wept
aloud—
Yet wherefore, dared not wonder.

Then anon,
Sweet Zephyrs with warm censers in their eyes
With spiced fragrance in their every look,
Came kneeling at his feet, and with low lutes
Began their humble pæan; but he hissed,
Much as a wounded serpent, and they fled
In terror'd mut'ny down Olympus flanks.
Unmoved as is the flame-ribbed sun he stood,

A curse in every angle, mockery
In every stubborned line, and black turmoil
Nursing upon his heart most hellish hate.
Then came the pearl of all that household
high—

A prism-mantled daughter of the lyre—
Who met the purplind bearing fierce and
strange,
With maiden innocence, and there poured
forth

A rich warm nectar of sweet minstrelsy
Into his empty ears and fed them gall;
Another hiss, and that aspiring voice
Fell wounded into discord. Then with scorn
That laid its pestilential length adown
His whole corroding spirit, he bent low
His scorching eyes to earth, and folded firm
His crampen arms as if to swathe the wound
Sunk on his nature difficult, and walked—
Whither, he knew not—cared not, save to mix
Some compound drug of reason that could
soothe

His ravaged virgin vanity. Oh Pride!
Thou mother of the still-born pomps of men
That turns state's evidence, how even gods
In their omnific states nurse thee with pap
Distilled of wolf's bane and the follies bred
Of over-ease and power. O traitored Hour!—
The season when all Nature is propelled

By counter reason, and of shame cast back
In her progressive weal, waning away.
Alas, for him who paced his golden path
As if 't were moulten lava ravaged down
From the discredited cup of some dead moon.

But soon this mighty mischief on his soul
Was challenged by a sager argument ;
And with his clenching lids dropt as a veil
Betwixt him and that riven stage of woe,
He touched the tiger wrath on the fierce mane
As with a wand of reason politic,
And forth there was a calm. Then from the
 deeps

Of that stern bosom widened to the thought,
He poured the sterling mood to heaven, and
 shook

Those rascal follies to a sober dawn
Of logic calmer to the mad refrain,
And spake, of half repentance seized :—

“Alas!

Why am I thus benight of heathen rage
As to out-spleen the dogs of damned desire
Hard at the heels of Folly? Why am I
By this insidious lust for that which pride
Must challenge from ill-circumstance, made
 babe

With even mortal malice? Down, Pride!
 down :

And thou malfeasant and opprobrious dog
That slips the noose upon me unaware—
Doubt ! rebel to heaven, presuming now
To conquest back the birthright of thy due,
Why should not the all-judging elements
Lash challenge on thy horny cheek, if now
Thou'rt grown unfit to lord them ? Why not
all

The unslaved paramount of earth and heaven
Fling gauntlet at thy feet and cry thee coward,
When by such scurvèd deed thou art proved
kith

With damnedest viperdom ? Alas for me !
That these unmuzzled means of mine do chafe
And fester the right arm that wears their seal.
Power ! oh, what a burden thou on any brow
But the Almighty God's. The stygean wolf
Would be a god ; the god, sick of his state
And the metheglin courtesies of fools,
Would stoop to rob a sepulcher and lick
A pagan's leechèd bones, if but to break
This fag-born mad monotony of rule."

Thus the preserver of the arts, sprang up
Full in the mete conviction of his wrong,
Bowed of o'er-apt compulsion to the truth,
With shame anointing even these gaping
wounds
By the red lash of Science mothered there

When she confessed her quickened wish that
Doubt—

Her first-born flung down to the nadir seas—
Be here recalled to minister to heaven,
And sway the realm of Truth far, far without
Its proper orbit. Thus the Truth-god won
Upon his sun-pitched pride a conquest mete—
A double-due nobility which hence
Could serve even this chiefmost arm of Law
A purpose to the marrows. Then he smoothed
Down from his shoulders those perplexèd
locks

Which by this extreme infamy of wrath
That might have torn another chaos down
Upon Creation's minting palms, was rent
Into confounded coil, and stroked his beard
Knotty and complicate as mystery's self.
Then spelled at heart by forced composure so,
On straightway paced he to his capitol,
Where, in the sordid chill of solitude,
He could repair his mood, and to these
wronged

And thrice insulted subject Powers of heaven,
Make properest recompense, and so regain
Their elemental will.

Thus sweet resolved,
He mounted the huge port beyond the gates,
But ere he entered, gazed into the noon

With crimson courtesies greeting the stars
That bore him sweet salute. Then on and on
Through peristyle and opal-armored vault,
Through transept pale with iridescent mist
Of fragrant fountains, on through rapturous
naves

In phantasy mosaic-floored, still on
Through crescent arcades prised happily
In hues swept from the arched pavilion hung
With crystal pendants diamonding the light—
And still on, on, till soon the busy din
Of sky-god voices trespassed on his ears.
He halted ; but he halted then too late :
For forth from yon pale polygon of state
Wherein the allies of this armèd god
Held council stern, a form approached him
swift

With fingers pressed all chidingly her lips,
And step of featherest safety, bending down
Her lithe-limbed grace all kneelingly submit
Before him as in adoration. Still
A stern task jeopardized that fevering lip,
As though she bowed o'er some precipitate
And jutting ledge that looked down on a hell
Of peril, quivering. He, with frown and fear,
Bade her arise and make her mission plain ;
But with a hiss, she beckoned him to take
Her hand and be led off from hazard soil,
And learn the truth in secret. But again

That arrogance rose to his furrowed front,
And with a voice o'er-panoplied of scorn,
Demanded :—

“What would'st make of me, thou daughter
Of the divorcive Destinies?—up! speak!
Truth is an open secret to the gods,—
The least e'en to greatest, braving default
E'en in their very teeth, so armored-proof
Stands he in th' face of question. Speak to me!
What wonder-working mystery is this
Which would make Truth repair unto his cell
And play the anchor scarred in penance
damned
For sin unwrit of Judgment? Ho! ye risen
All-wise of meting heaven : what rebel doubt
That Truth prevails and captious hell is con-
quered
Maintains? speak thou! Methinks the universe
Ungirdled hath been trapped, and anarch
fiends
Taken up the hilt of rule. What mischief
yonder
That thou would'st bribe with snaring eyes
thy king
From his rebellious realm? Off! bid me pass!
And durst thou?....”

Then resolvèd even more,

The goddess, champion of that moment fierce,
Threw her faint form full in his irate path,
Clinging his sovereign skirts beseeching still
With more of earnestness than dignity
Up to his shrinking mien:—

“Most worshipful
Of the benignant suns in whose reflect
And solemn light we are ! On lowliest knee
Doth she the second trunk of Science, bend—
And wherefore ? Oh why task me to the tale ?
Hear'st not the fury-teeming din beyond
And know'st not yet the meaning ? They are
there—

The gods of Truth's great household with
their Queen

Science, that stubborn and unbending hilt
Who yet despite thy curse shall part the gates
Of heaven to him her first-born whom she
flung

To the swollen seas, and let the rebel Doubt
Behold his mother to the dust repentant.
E'en now the young god raps upon the gates,
With murmurings and beseechings which shall
take

Anon a threatening measure if thou still
Deny him. And be warned : for he hath
trumped

Full many of thy most trusted armories

To battle 'gainst their god if he be loath
To grant him audience. Venture not, I pray ;
Oh venture not in their rebellious midst
Lest thou, too, even o'ercome of impulse rash,
Precipitate some heady violence
That brings disaster on thy sun-propped realm.
Oh leave them to their moils but for an hour ;
And though thou art the foremost in the wrong,
Mayhap forgiveness gains ascendance, and
By eventide may even Science greet
Her oft'-forgetful sovereign with a kiss,
And these impending tragedies be foiled.
Come, come, O Peer ! and let me counsel
thee ;
Come : to the groves that skirt this upper
Eden
With fragrant 'broideries of flowers and herb ;
There seal thy soul its ease !"

Then the bowed frame
Of the Olympian Pillar shook like reed
In blind precipitation of his pride ;
And gathering up his huge reserve, he struck
The quaking floors with his subduing palms
Till the seized mountain groaned. Then hurl-
ing wide
That bronzed panoply girding his trunk
As to pluck out all soft resolves that bent
His neck to sufferance, he measured forth

A titan stride on toward the peopled court,
Leaving his smoking footprints swart and
 sunk
In the marmorial highways as he passed,
And all the arc dammed up their million
 mouths,
Their pæans bursting from melodious din
To discord mutinous. The portals huge
Of that tumultuous alabaster nave
Stood as Colossus' limbs before him parted
Like hell yawn to the Inferi. On, on,
He strode, each moment fiercer guled
Of forehead with a scarlet-frowned resolve,
His crownless locks whipping the wildered air,
And with heaven-lashing eyes, that gaping port
Into their tempest-stricken midst—entered!—
Yea, even into their mid-most turmoils
He plunged, as hundred-handed in his wrath
As Typhon sprung from galled Tartarus
Into the poltroon field, and stood defiant.
The mountain heaved alike a panting boar
Hounded of cruel hunter, breaching wide
Her mammoth ribs by the audacious volt,
Fuming with fear down to her moulted heart.
The rebel elements and sovereign arms
That served their Prince till on this sunken
 hour
With cringing fawn,—all, all assumed the
 plague,

Swilling to mad intemperance the draught
That seized them to the vitals and rent riot
Through the tense fever and the broil of noon.
That over-brooded wrath of Truth made quail
Even his sovereign self ; and he bent down
Like fiend, with grip upon his fretted throat,
Lab'ring to damn back the delirium
That ran each vein with ever-thicker rheum
And venom to the core, lest far beyond
Redeem the fanes of heaven precipitate
Plunge Doubtward ; but that causeless purpose
flagged.

Scourge upon scourge those glances lightning-
fanged

Fell flaying the dumb noon, and by mischance
Full into the pale face of Science drove.

There was his madness met a thousand-fold
More scourgful of reproach ; for like a nymph
Of stiff flint hewn abandoned in some niche
Inviolatè, she tranquil stood at bay,
With poignant venom in the aweless eyes,
Gazing contempt full in his seething front.

Then in one counter-volt there fell a calm
Athwart that heaving realm, and war was
hushed

Dumb-mouthed of all those batteries of hate,
And at her feet the great god sank subdued.
The tragedy was o'er ; and yet that host
Of awe-assembled deities aghast,

Stood in dishevelled ranks, locked arm in arm
One with another as to prop their fears.
There lay the shield of conquest headlong
thrown

In the delirium, a sacrifice
To the prevailing thirst ; and nearest this
The Arts unmaskèd stood, with usual mien
Vanquished to cowardice and paltroon faint ;
Then Poesy, and Music, and she too
Their homaged consort bent,—all gathering up
The fragments of their valiance in default,
Embalmed of sable marvelling at such
Fell mutiny. And last of all, yet first
In this huge cast of battle-drama weird—
Least yielding still hard-stubborned in her
course—

Science, with pitchèd hatred pressed, low knelt
Down by the self-outbattled son of Jove,
And swept his martial locks from the wild
brows,

Staring that august wrath as she might peer
Down the red craters of diseasing *Ætna*
Blood-cankered to the midmost vitals deep.
He parted on the air his swollen lips,
Gazing down with a frown, half penitent
And still-defiant shame, thus grappling eyes
With his commandant spouse with look laid
bare

Like the calm edge of parched and thirsty steel

Hilted imperious. For moments there
While the o'er-swooned autocracy of day
Snatched back its poise and rose more soldierly,
The mutual vulture-eye as hard oppressed,
Stung haughtily its horny adversary,
Till each to each obedient now grew.
Then with the vantage balanced to her will,
Thus Science dared on the monarchical noon
A voice of pensioned amity, and smoothed
This dire alarm e'en with a woman's touch
Of tranquil caution and peace-offering
Thus rev'rently :—

“ O Truth ! heart-rivèd Chief !
Thou sky-surmounting Temple of the Law !—
By birth but equal, yet by prestige sumless
My lord—my full Transcendence ! Take these
words,
And by thy kindmost alchemies resolve
Each word t' its virgin pith, and of that gold
Weld thou a girdle for thy madcap loins.
Though king, chief, legislator, lord,
And over all my mincing pride of place
Thou strategist all absolute, far, far
Beyond and over all this feudal voice,
Thou art my husband,—aye, my sky-sworn
mate,
And I by virtue of the altar-stars

Which heard thy vow and mine, thy co-realmed
spouse.

Hear me, I charge, when lesser deities
Out-voiced are by thy thunders ; hear my
words

Though all the supercilious space shrink back
Into their infamies, dumb at thy hest
And craven to thy frown ; yea, hear my words
When all of the ambitious stars or earth
Turn their renowns to bubble disrepute
At glimpse of thy displeasure, and give heed
To link out to the holy utmost all
That prompts my tongue this burden...."

Then paused she,
And in that limpid interval there fell
A crucial stroke athwart the bowed god's
pride ;

And he arose and clenched his mitred teeth,
Shaking his druid frame as 't were a Sphinx
He would to put to proof by some huge task.
Then Science, full perceiving some new siege,
Shrank ; and up-poised her arm as to foil down
The shameless charge, parting with passive
speech

Her swollen lip, when thus reprisal came
Mettling the hilt of Truth :—

"Ye scorn-eclipsed

And brazen satellites who steal big fire
And gild repute, from such a sun as I!--
Ye cant-swathed and presumptuous moons
who thief

Your pompous glitter from this sovereign noon,
And vaunt upon the starveling heart of man
These baby-thunders that make boast to heaven
Your follies rank! be ye forewarned—fore-
armed:

Let Doubt war upon Truth with all your
brimmed

And vaunting cups to toast him into rule;
With all mankind pouring their red heart's life
Into the damned libation; yea, with all
The sovereign planets toppling o'er its verge
A moulted union precious to his weal;
But not till suns shall cease to pendulum space,
The God that is shall be a god that was,—
Till Past and Future like two brothers parted
Clasp hands on th' gallèd apex, realmless fall'n
In the black cerements of nadir night,
Shall Truth be crushed, a Doubt-god conquer
heaven,

Science eclipse the Christ, or a lie prevail.
Who am I, thus to take this rack of curse
Unflinching? Am I but your vantage-fool
To play at draughts with hell, 'stead of your
king?

What! I, the churl-born virmin at your call?—

The asp whipped into flattery by woman?—
The reptile of your blushless progeny,—
And all, forsooth, I am at times inapt
At bridling the rash license of my vein—
This yoke of rule that chafes me? Out! ye
 blind
Mal-mothered, pomp-o'erflattered, boneless
 breed!
Ye make me taste the Doubt-god's stygean
 spleen
When I so contemplate your unlicked shapes—
Down, down! ye she-bears of Imaus, down!
And finish your crude tasks. Out! ye rent suns
Presuming to my brows. And thou, bowed
 heaven!
My own blue wine-cup of its weal capsized
And on my head inverted!—thou art grave,
Pale-jaundiced and funereal in thy mien,
As if some hell's huge scorpion had snailed
Aslant thy azure front and in his wake
Another Milky Way of ulcers rank
Took root on thy virgin breast. Oh can it be
That this Time-buoying and sun-shouldering
 state—
This sovereign climax of the major gods—
Now stands war with its very subject Laws
To prove ascendancy? That Doubt so propped
Upon Olympus flanks, may whip the stars
To tribute, yoke the herding suns to toil

In hireling plowshares and these hornèd moons
To serve him flagon wherewith he may toast
My weal to hell, and spring to th' riven breech
A conqueror,—all but to prove Truth here
An underling of that he domineers?
Oh shame! Shall such ascendancy be clipped
As some Utopian fledgling over-apt
It father to out-region? Yet, O Day!
Must I lay down my arms e'en at the hiss
Of a rebellious heaven? Rend! ye vaults
That mock back my spent thunders, dungeon up
The rebel gods conspiring! Hence am I
By oath upon my crown, the challenger
Of all the mutinous principalities
That ache for war aud spoil. Hear me, Oh
Earth!—

Shielding th' opprobrious dog flung from this
seat

Of empire as unworthy of his sire—
Tremble, ye mid-main waters, and ye crags
That threat the bosom of the virgin skies!—
And ye blue-pacing clouds! bend to my reach;
For till this wrath be stayed, Science—the first
Of the offending mutineers who would
Grace back her banished son to greet her, now
Grown whelp-like penitent of all her past—
Aye, from yon cloud's swart entrails, by the
heel

Shall Science swing over the abyss of hell,

And yon mad whirlwinds wrench her wanton
limbs
Till she be purged of all her inborn guilt,
And justice stand appeased. The hour is up!
Down, down, ye seething clouds! Doubt shall
not rule...."

So vowing, the mordacious god threw high
His huge vein-bloated arms above his rocked
And crownless brows, driving that arrowy
shriek

Home to the heart of heaven. Him answering
back,

The Whirlwinds in their brutish chariots
Flocked vulture-like, cloaking that sacred fane
With one encumbrous mask of poison fumes
Sulphurous of tomb-damp and the broil of hell
With rheum and hemlock in each mortal
draught.

The victim of that ravaged sovereign's wrath
Shrank to the nave, and many a shielding god
Threw his cerulean mantle down upon
That sunk and crouching feature as to hide
Their queen from the great god's advancing
wrath.

But judging their rash stratagem, with this
He struggled forward to the ambushed queen,
Rent a huge swath in those defending ranks
Betwixt his wrath malignant and its slave,

Snatched forth that goddess in his giant grip,
And 'mid the hiss and gnashing, threw her high
Above his bolting head and strided forth—
Forth to the abrupt ledge of that vast hall
Where look the portals o'er the yawn of hell—
There hesitating but one dread-bound trice
Ere hurling her in all her sovereign robes
Out on the itching and wide-armed cloud
That fevered to his will. That sweet delay
Stood fatal to his cause ; for lo ! there met
The Truth-god at that rim where heaven looks
down

Upon the tempest-battling Earth, a giant form,
A stranger in their midst, with tenting eyes
Defiant, and with stubborned arm uppoised,
Wielding some mammoth weapon of the sea.
Truth faltered, but relinquished not his task.
Meanwhile the fragile gods skirting his state,
Dammed up the open port, and shrieked for
joy

At the new-dawnèd chief, and he the king
O'ercome by such a tide of counter-plot,
Let fall his precious spoil, clenching amain
His spirit combatant into the breach,
Demanding :—

“Who art thou, O Son of Space !
And how durst so to trespass on this seat
Of calm divinity with arms profane ?

Out, out ! thou snake of Erebus”

And yet,
The young-browed sponsor from that under-
world
Moved not ; but cradling his calm-eyed resolve
Backboned of the dishonor heaped thus
Upon his mother's cheek, dared forth and
spake
While all the elements made greedy stir
To toast his gallantry :—

“Thou know'st me not ?—
And yet upon the throne of Truth who bears
A worthier title to the name of ‘Son’ ?
That daughter of the Light whom thou pre-
sum'st
With anarch arms to cast opprobrious
Into the teeth of fiends to bruit to hell
The volley of thy rascal spleen, in truth,
Thy wife, thy sister ; yet to me she bears
A nearer, dearer-churched affinity
True through the tide of this eternal noon.
I am the Doubt-god who by treason foul
And these wry wherefores by which God enacts
The reasonless law of sufferance and pain
Which deities nor yet the underbred
Of earth may solve to adequate design,
Was headlong cast down from my templed pitch

In dudgeon fell deep to the rankling seas,—
And all, forsooth, that Science bore a Doubt
To honor thee, rather than puny Faith,
To bear thy realm a seal. And I am come
To gain back this ascendance from me torn,
By dint of arms and by siege combating
If thus denied my pleading turned to scorn ;
And first of all demand of captious Truth,
How durst this black indignity upon
My mother's brow? Speak—speak !....”

With this bare speech
Sunk on his cankering heart with vital sting,
The awful god upheaved his speechless bulk
Till like a meteor his feature blazed ;
Then summing up his ire and leaning back
As to bombard a citadel of fiends,
He plunged at the young warrior at the gates,
And with his brawn-taut clench upon the
throat
Of that hard-struggling interloper, up,
High up into dumb and wildered air,
Mid groans and shrieks that pried the port of
heaven
And made this solid seat of empire quail,
With headlong pitch he cast him into space
With curses, saw him reel on the dim void
Till to a mote that giant import shrank—
Down, down, soon lost upon the strained eye—
Earthward descending through the vast inane !



Untitled Lyrics and Sonnets



Untitled Lyrics and Sonnets

I.

This world's but Truth-god's tear-drop, love,
A Truth-god's crystallized tear ;
Some say 't was a tear of sorrow, love,
Some say 't was of gladness, dear.
To me 't is a tear of sadness, love,
When thou no more art here ;
In truth 't is a tear of gladness, love,
When thou, my life, art near.

And Life is a peal of laughter, love,
Aye, Life is a laugh, and well :
Some say 't is a laugh from heaven, love,
Some say 't is a scoff from hell ;

But whether 't is laughter of ecstasy, love,
Or a fiend's once a mortal that fell,
Nor saints, nor sages, nor prophets, love,
Can stand before heaven and tell.

These days are mysterious dream-seasons, love,
Yea, mystery a mystery within ;
Some say they 're an opiate rapture, love,
Some say they 're a penance for sin.
Yet, whose sin, yet what sin, and why, love,
We die ere to know we begin ;
Yet, whence, and yet whither, these mysteries,
love,—
All 's answered in what might have been.

And Death is the handmaid of Life, love,
Aye, Death is the maid at her right ;
Some say 't is an angel of Eden, love,
Some say 't is a demon of Night.
'T is a god to the Faith that beckons it, love,
'T is a fiend to the coward in flight ;
But whether thing holy or damned, love,
Still cries saint and sage for 'More Light !'

And Charity—God-spousèd Charity, love,
That fount whence all heart's-ease may flow,
Some say she is dead,—aye, long dead, love,
Yet, some say she still lives below.

She's a living, on-waging triumph, love,
In one deed of uplifting from woe ;
She's a dead-hearted, carrion mask, love,
To the faith that hath died long ago.

But Love ! thou art constancy multiplied still :
This world to thy world—oh, how small !
Some say thou art born every hour, and yet,
Some say thou wert ne'er born at all.
But whether eternity lies in thy look,
Or serv'st but these blind hours to call,
Thy sun warm the noon of our peace, Love !
Till heavens on heaven shall fall.

II.

How rose a promise with that sun
That breathed like incense from the sea,
To teach my youth each day begun
A new life-dawn of liberty !
Ah, life was non-oblivion
In all I thought young Love to be.

The wreathing stars embowered my dreams
Like Saturn with a thousand girds ;
And Nature in those rich extremes,
Gave me a conquest over words.
Ah, what a solemn rite to me,—
This, this I dreamt young Love to be !

And Night wrapt Solitude in thought,
Whisp'ring sweet speech of paradise ;
And when my solemn spirit caught
The deep reflection, ah, 't was thrice
Proved sire of that divine To be
In all that love should seek in me.

And forests, stars, and flowers, and caves,
Were virgins trothed my warrior Thought ;
While I like some pleased sire who raves
So like a lover over-wrought,
Joined in their nuptial jubilee—
'Twas all I thought young Love to be.

And I made mirth for Sorrow's dearth,
Drank sadness to the dying year ;
Joyed with each advent cycle's birth,
Kissing the flagon to its cheer ;
And Faith's sweet answers were to me
All, all I thought young Love to be.

My soul ! hath time taught thee the less
That life God-arrowed from the grave,
And Truth and Faith and Power caress
Only God's children over-brave ?
Ah, may these never cease in thee
To prove all thou deem'st Love to be.

III.

Sweet Woman !—rival of all else
Of earth unto my willing soul,—
How at thy touch of love, my whole
Proud being kneels and its profane thought
melts.

I love thee ; for thou art alone
The first and best interpreter
Of all the scripture truths that were,
And are, and yet shall kiss the cloistered stone.

Wherein is goodness save in thee ?—
Meek miracle of larger Will ;
Wherein is faith save in thee still ?—
My heaven elect that is, and is to be.

I love thee ; yet 't would be a crime
In aught that knew to love thee not ;
So love's my simple, childish lot,
And not a virtue proven so sublime.

God gave me but a rugged heart
To serve thine own, turning its tide
To love for thy sweet sake, and wide
The gates of peace and plenty bear apart.

Thou, o'er my spirit's church and state
First prophet sovereign at that shrine ;
All that is mine thus truly, doubly thine,
Reproving wrong and kneeling kindly Fate.

Love, every hour outspeeds a year
In thy fond presence, and to me
Life hath the ring of victory
When eve is come and thou, my life, art near.

What tribute can Affection pay
In fealty to so prime a grace ?—
Only the light of thy dear face
Can wave these all-offending glooms away.

Only such recompense as this
Requites to heaven a fallen hope ;
Only such constancy may ope'
The temple gates into God-chosen bliss.

Thus love I thee: thou art alone
The first and best interpreter
Of all the scriptural laws that were
And are, and yet shall kiss the cloistered
stone,

IV.

There was once a trance-like being
Who arose ethereal-souled,
From that Calm beyond our seeing—
From Truth's urn of moulted gold—
Rose like a god of Triumph bold.

Prophecy sat on his forehead,
Power throned on his look and tongue ;
Truth and Beauty there recorded
Bonds with Nature's heart unsung,
And the gods his lyre strung.

Long, long heard the world his crying
Through the darkness to the stars ;
Long, long watched this master prying
Through yon armories of Mars—
Phœbus' bolts and Saturn's bars.

His was touch of transformation—
Love's young oracle of light ;
God in dreams and meditation,
God in effort, God in right—
God in all that conquers Night.

Then came there a day of trial,—
Lo ! his conquest was no more ;

And the gods with shattered dial
Their rich promises forswore—
Curst whom they had kissed before.

Then the world knelt by his pillow
Where Italian twilights knelt,
And they marvelled that the willow
Bent so close the tomb where dwelt
He whom Nature knew and felt.

Aye, they marvelled ; yet they knew not
Why Earth bowed in widowhood,
Silent wept where wormwood grew not ;
But that one whom Beauty wooed,
Nature loved and understood.

Ah, how many a starry-hearted
Looks with love his brothers' eyes ;
Yet receives for love imparted
Only hate in hooded guise—
Hate that speaks through kissing eyes.

But the valiant in their daring
For their fellow-frail below,
Though mistaken looks are wearing,
Nature loves and honors so :
None but God the heart can know.

V.

Come with me, my angel-bride,
Let us wander side by side ;
Where bowed Winter's cradle lies
'Tween the peaks that fret the skies,—
In the eaves of glacial mountains,
By their star-eclipsing fountains.
Where the mother Whirlwind rocks
Her babes upon the equinox ;
And the pale clouds kiss her bed
Like the shrouds that woo the dead.

Come with me, my angel-bride,
Where the summer Psyche died :
Where the snows that mound her cave
Guard it as a hero's grave.
Where the vales of suns unblest,
Find young Noon by Night caressed ;
And mad avalanches throw
Storm-leviathans below,
And those torrent waters twine
Mountain music all-divine.

Come with me, my angel-bride,
Where yon Years by Lethe hide ;
Where dead Ages found their prime—

Deathless anchorage of Time.
Where these Hours, like Truth-god's tears,
Swift distil to torrent years ;
Still o'er-flowing high their lake,
Valley pilgrimages make ;
Sweeping crystal fingers o'er
The lyres of the mountain roar.

Come with me, my angel-bride,
Where the drowsing billows ride ;
Where the poppied isles of ease
Sleep in paradisial seas.
Where the spirit kissed of Ages,
Walks with patriarchs and sages ;
And the love of love's content
Thus with Nature's nature blent ;
God and his Earth-image one—
One sweet labor never done.

Come with me, my angel-bride,
Where those Springtide-nymphs abide ;
In Elysiums of light,
Forging armors 'gainst the night.
Lifting Progress from dead fact,—
Man to think and man to act.
Where they press at morn of years—
Truth's west-waging pioneers—
And with wands imperial, free,
Bid all beauty rise and be.

Come with me, my angel-bride ;
Widowed Autumn, golden-dyed,
Rides her chariot of sighs :
Let us follow till she dies.
See ! the May-child lays her head
On November's bosom-bed ;
While her anadem of dew
Pales a frosten, anguished hue ;
And her smile of earnest light
Chills e'en at the kiss of Night.

Come with me, my angel-bride,
Come and wander by my side ;
Where all realms of earth or air
Teach us truths divinely fair.
Where the God in man is blest
A heaven in his own passion-breast.
Come where Nature's bosom bare
Bids you pillow Life's despair ;
Proving by her blessings rife :
God is love, and love is life.

VI.

The simple heart the truest beats,
The simplest joys are purest ;
The simple life the truest life,
The simplest faith the surest.

The simplest truths the God's truths are,
The simple deeds, the dearer ;
Love, simply love makes life worth life,
And heaven through these the nearer.

Then let the simple mind bow down,
Taking the penance of our days
With big, big thanks ; leaving to him
Who boasts, the curse of praise.

Then let the simple hope be glad,
And in a childlike trust most wise ;
And let the duty done see heaven
Deep in some thankful eyes.

Only the godless hope dethroned
Finds the red heart turned infidel ;
Only flesh-ambitions fallen
Taste the deeps of hell.

The glittering art that prays sweet prayers
At heaven, but unto men,
Finds in success the devil's curse
That shall return again.

The simple deed, the simple strain,
The simple word God-given—
These start great worlds on orbits high,
And prop the eaves of heaven.

Peace, peace! young Heart; close thy
wide eyes—
Shut out the castle of thy dream;
Thy worship find a simpler creed,
Thy art, a simpler theme.

VII.

A sun rose, and a sun died,
And on darkness swooned the day ;
A love rose, and a love died—
In its passion wept away.

Had the dead sun been the God's sun,
'T would have dawned eternal day ;
Had the dead love been the God's love,
'T would have lived and loved for aye.

VIII.

There's in grief a solace—lo!
Even if the cup o'erflow,
When we reason down the sorrow
With a faith, and by our woe
The godlier grow.

A like nobleness God gave
To the work of king and slave,
If with valient arm and conscience
Man be there to dare be brave
To do or save.

Even in a failure lies
Something still that dignifies
If the heart be in the purpose
That men from their dead selves rise,
And grow Truth-wise.

There are virtues in the deed
Of the meanest child of need,
If that art proves a religion,
And not merely to succeed
Be our creed.

Even in the deed long dead
There's a living god, 't is said,
Who shall rise and prove that manhood
Doth transcend the heart that bled
And art that fled.

There's a heart's-ease in our care—
A redemption in despair,
If we prove by purpose mighty
And by thoughts all pure and fair,
That Truth lives there.

Not one tender tear-drop lies
On the eyelids of the skies
But is Nature's humbled heart
In some crystalline disguise
Great and wise.

IX.

The God in loveliness ascends again,
And lo! Creation as on that first day
When Light out-conquered Chaos, doth
array

The young-eyed Morn and all her vestal-
train

In bridal liveries, and hangs a chain
Of crescent sunlight on her trothèd breast.

All things of beauty as from night-long rest
And silver solitude rise forth and rain
The dews in oracles upon my heart;
And there they crystallize to diamond
dreams,—

Thoughts that do find in words but a child's
art,

And so unvoicèd—die. Ah, all that seems
To hurl a passion o'er me, seems to steal
Its language from my lips; for words—words
cannot feel.

X.

O Solitude! if in thy druid court
These years shall lift their incense to their
God,
Prying to heaven through yonder fiery port—
The sun of Truth—and from the drowsy sod
Lift temples to the Virtues, let me trod
The dusts with men, and all of chaste report,
Honor. And let the beautiful and true
Bend to my couch as waking to the sleeper,
And let me by thy steadfast star pursue
The Unseen through the seen; search out
the keeper
Of every castled Charity, and do
For the sweet doing's sake,—be true for
Truth,
Love for Love's sake, and find in faith eter-
nal youth.

XI.

Through all the changes that the morntide
brings,

Through all the reverent cycles of the year,
Through all the deeps where panting stars
career,

Consuming darkness on their pyre-like wings
The poet chariots ; and o'er all he flings
A dream-transparency all strange and clear.

New arts and age their church of state
uprear,

'Nointing the poet priest o'er rarest things
Too beautiful to breathe this leaden seal
Of mortal sufferance. But from these deep
And seer-like visitations doth he steal
Immortal moments—moments like to sleep
Giv'n o'er to sudden waking—thoughts
that heal

The wound on th' heart of man, teaching
the soul to feel.

XII.

If I like babe had sweet Cassandra's ears
To list' the touchstone voice of Nature true,
To upspeed Thoughts like cloudward pio-
neers

That pierce the secrets of our being through,
Solving this unknown Why, and of each hue,
Or sound, or excellence of living thing,

Interpret with a fire and passion new,
And on bowed Error God's compassion fling,
Then would I be a prophet, and for you;
To crystallize your life into a gem,

And lay it where the first of heaven might
woo

To bead with love their azure anadem,

And live new life in the reflected hue—

The hue that wreathes this heart with ama-
ranth—not rue.

XIII.

Sweet friend!—the prop of all the manhood
mine—

Sire of my heart so bountifully free:
First father, since my truest birth in thee
I bow and honor as a charge divine!
Why should I cloister virgin Love to pine
In night untokened, and this gratitude
I would she bear from my soul's solitude
To thy warm hours, drip wormwood in the
wine—

My love's libation to thy weal e'en now?

Forbid! sweet synod of thanks-taking gods.
Teach me apt medium for my praise! and
thou

My friend, my condisciple: he who trods
The scorn-malignant earth his thanks may
glove

In words; but silence aye bespeaks the richer
love.

XIV.

Men's souls are channels for the Faith-god's
wine—

That nectar which Creation brews from
heaven

To rouse some Doubt-child of the heart's
divine

And daring One Idea. The world would
leaven

These attributes of genesis and growth,

And change and aspiration, that would stir

A spirit to high state ; there lies an oath

Embosomed of this young astrologer

Who would to read the stars with magian
eyes

And power spontaneous, and on the lip

Of Truth's young soldier in some new em-
prise

Of beauty or of song, who dares to dip

His pen into the rainbow ; aye, a vow

That writes heavens history upon a infant's
brow.

XV.

I dreamt I found a holy hydromel
Leaping from cragged Wisdom answering
back

A poet-prophet's rod. 'T was mine to dwell
Beside this gush of heaven, and noonly
slake

My fever-thirst till every vital swell
With purposes most reverent and deep.
And now, oh, let me prove thee, Sire of
Light!—

Thy bounty in this tribute, while I weep
That 't is unworthy so; but ever bright
Thy person lives beneath thy deed,—'t will
keep

Thy vigils all a-flame blessing me thrice.

And now for a swift season, Sire ! farewell ;
Thou in thy God, and I as sentinel
At thy great Labors' gate, shall find true
paradise.

XVI.

My heart is lifted, and a god appears !
Not in the summer semblance of a dream
Which from this brackish gulf of human tears
Rises to prove men other than they seem ;
But now beside the mountain's headlong
stream,

Beside the sister snow-crag's peak on peak,
Beside the Titan glacier's crystal gleam,
My spirit revels till my pulse grows weak
With this spontaneous luxury of awe.
And lo ! I gaze, but cannot, would not,
speak ;

Thus yielding the unbodied soul, I draw
The prophet's veil on my new-realmèd heart,
Crushing all speech to silence bowed and
meek—

Meek as some child of Nature's counterpart
Who, to make passion wise, finds but in deeds
true art.

XVII.

Arise, young Sun ! and beard the armed sky—
Thou Faith-led phantasy of rugged song!
The gods their symbol of the wise and
strong

Have found in thee. Tell me ; does Duty try
Or do? Truth's secret flames in thy fierce eye
And open heart-throb ; do thy Art no
wrong

In calling upon heaven to prolong
The measure of thy labor-season. Die
A thousand times for Truth and learn to
live :

This is thy privilege, not scourge. Arise!
And let the opiate of ease that pries
Deep to flattered socket, spill ; then give
One patient, listening moment to thy heart ;
And having learned it well, dwell with thy
soul apart.

XVIII.

The gods watch o'er the hero as he lies
On this hard couch of labor and resolve;
And round and round his contrite days
revolve
The suns that give him arms and light.
His eyes
Now Godward turn, and like a seer he pries
Deep to the primal arcs of Time, and lo!
His spirit so ascendant, there is met
And blest his seeking, and he bears below
The law that serves the gods an amulet—
The law of labor by which Power did sweat
Creation forth from Chaos, long ere Woe
And Indolence, that mother of young Crime,
Made such a beasts' arena of old Time,
Where men for three score years must suffer,
bleed and go,

XIX.

Thou cloudward Spirit! like a comet swift,
Self-ravishing through all observant space:
Thou Power in weakness that doth nightly
trace

God on the all Mysterious, and lift
Mankind from this trite circle through the
rift

Between the parted stars—Art! thy embrace
Rocks all these babes of promise, born of
grace

And supreme unction, and thy bridal gift
Is the young Nature's heirloom of the
Light—

Empyrean goodness open on the face
Of things most commonplace, breathing
bright

A fire into themselves and all mankind;
Despising power, or purse, or time, or race,
So long as Art is proved th' redeemer of
mind.

XX.

Pale star ! still steadfast orbited of Trust
As when my childhood innocence was taught
How much of a heart's faith is anguish-
bought—

How much of love embraced but planet-dust;
How much of life's chilled discipline is
'must,'

And pleasure oft' of th' forging curse is
wrought ;

How men turn cowards hounded by their
thought,

And unchurched morals rank to wanton rust.

With thee oh, let me still abide, and pay
This debt of youth's almighty pledge of
deeds

With manhood's labors, and my brave To-day
Transcend the dead ten thousand days that
sway

From history and scripture. Now, oh, Now
My solemn watchword be,—my creed, my art,
my vow !

XXI.

Sweet Mother of the Beautiful and True!—
Thou yet unravished of polluting eyes—
Why may I not throw down this purple
guise
Called 'Custom,' cast this crown of thorns
and rue
From my faint brow, and but for you, for
you—
O perfect spirit! grow austere and wise
In resignation—ah, that law which pries
A godship from the heart of man,—and do
Where now I dream of doing? Why, still why
Must man wage on 'gainst hell with but a
truce
For right-armed weapon and a coward's mail
To prove his worth to heaven? Why must
snail
This unclean creed of Use that is Abuse
Grown cunning? Up, dead soul! let Cour-
age still prevail.

XXII.

There bends a solemn season on my heart :
An Autumn season mellow, deep, and
strange ;

For Memory with that calm-voiced master-
art,

Forgetting this mad repetend of change,
Pours these pale images of death and rest
Upon this palsied, spectre-ridden breast.

My spirit flags ; and the quick sense grown
dumb,

I cannot wake to words this prisoned thought.
The chariot in which I have been caught

Up, up into my Love's Elyseum,
Is halt, and lo ! now tombward turned apace.
Ah Memory !—thou dead child in my em-
brace—

Thou chill'st me ; and the glory of the morn
Breathes poison on my soul grief-riven, bleed-
ing, torn.

XXIII.

The God in man can never pass away ;
For it returneth to that parent arc,
Whence it is proved transcendent. This sure
spark
Of Truth within us—this inspired clay
All fire, all feeling : 'twas not for a day
Snatched into being from uncertain dark
To kiss dumb Circumstance, or make its
mark
With blood and tear-drops, and thus to decay
Sink nightward evermore ; but at the tomb
Doth man receive true birth, and unto God
Henceforth ascendant, doth himself resume—
The self of that prenatal day before
Thus born to being on this alien sod,
And there lives he the life of Life forevermore.

XXIV.

'T is midnight, O my soul ! and thou awake,
Counting the dead day's hours long loved
and lost,

As if a rosary with some beads tossed
Into oblivion for thy folly's sake.
Take up thy staff, arise ! young Heart, and
make

Repair for every idle thought that crossed
Thy sacred threshold at such fatal cost.

Let Faith regale thee fondly. Rise ! and take
King Sloth thus by the vulnerable heel
And hurl him hellward ; then still closer
steal

Upon the footsteps of thy Nature's God,
Learning the proper prelude to thy heaven :
Thy place in this wide drama, and so plod
Onward, till be fulfilled one talent thou wert
given.

XXV.

Her lips were parted to the prayer
That rose as if each word
Called down a star from heaven there,
To prove the good God heard.

My soul was void and darkness ; but
Truth cried, 'Let there be light !—'
And lo ! my loved one's look uprose,
And Day had conquered Night.

How wound that spotless spirit round
About my selfish soul !—
Without her but a fragment, I ;
But she has made me whole.

Peace, peace ! my heart ; seal close thy lips,
Thy secret is too dear ;
Peace, peace ! lest Fate, or the cold world,
Or even heaven hear.

XXVI.

Sweet-sceptred Morrow!
With thy golden eaves
Shelt'ring the present from the dews of death:
Youth, sans a tear, a sorrow—
Woos thee ; and leaves
The past to be embalmed in its tomb-breath,
Sifting the gold till love extinguisheth.

How doth the young Faith-child
With visions weird and wild,
Flatter the sanguine hope to undefiled
And heaven-folding fact
Wherein a child may act
The role of a sovereign god, and so maintain!
Ah, for these realmèd flights—
Grave, talismanic rites
Of infant prayers that wreathe the infant Day
With somewhat of a hero's immortality—
God ! let them not forever pass away.

To him who wraps his days
In this consuming hymn of praise
Not one of Time's pale, sceptic parasites
That feeds on such Utopian delights,
Can steal into the night alone

One petal of its flower ;
Nor kiss the silver zone
Of one refined and vestal-bosomed hour
With a pollution. Nay,
So much for God-armed Emulation's oath,—
Feeding this blind nativity
With power and purpose. Wisdom is a growth,
Not impulse. Only deeds maintain
In th' face of triflers. Culture alone is gain ;
All else are merely riches—bubbled, vain.
So spake the hero-prophet—he
Browed of an elder-born philosophy :—

‘Sleep on, dead World ! I would not know
thee less ;
But I in Truth stand free—
And as a freedman, scorn thy damned caress.’

XXVII.

Doth Nature dare profane the creed she swears
In travail with the bulk of humankind—
 Calling them men?
 There is a general mind
With triflers and sly traffickers of wares
 Pollution-kissed of hell,
Eager by devil's counsel o'er-refined
 In pity for the saint that fell
Discoursing tribute to the sword and pen.

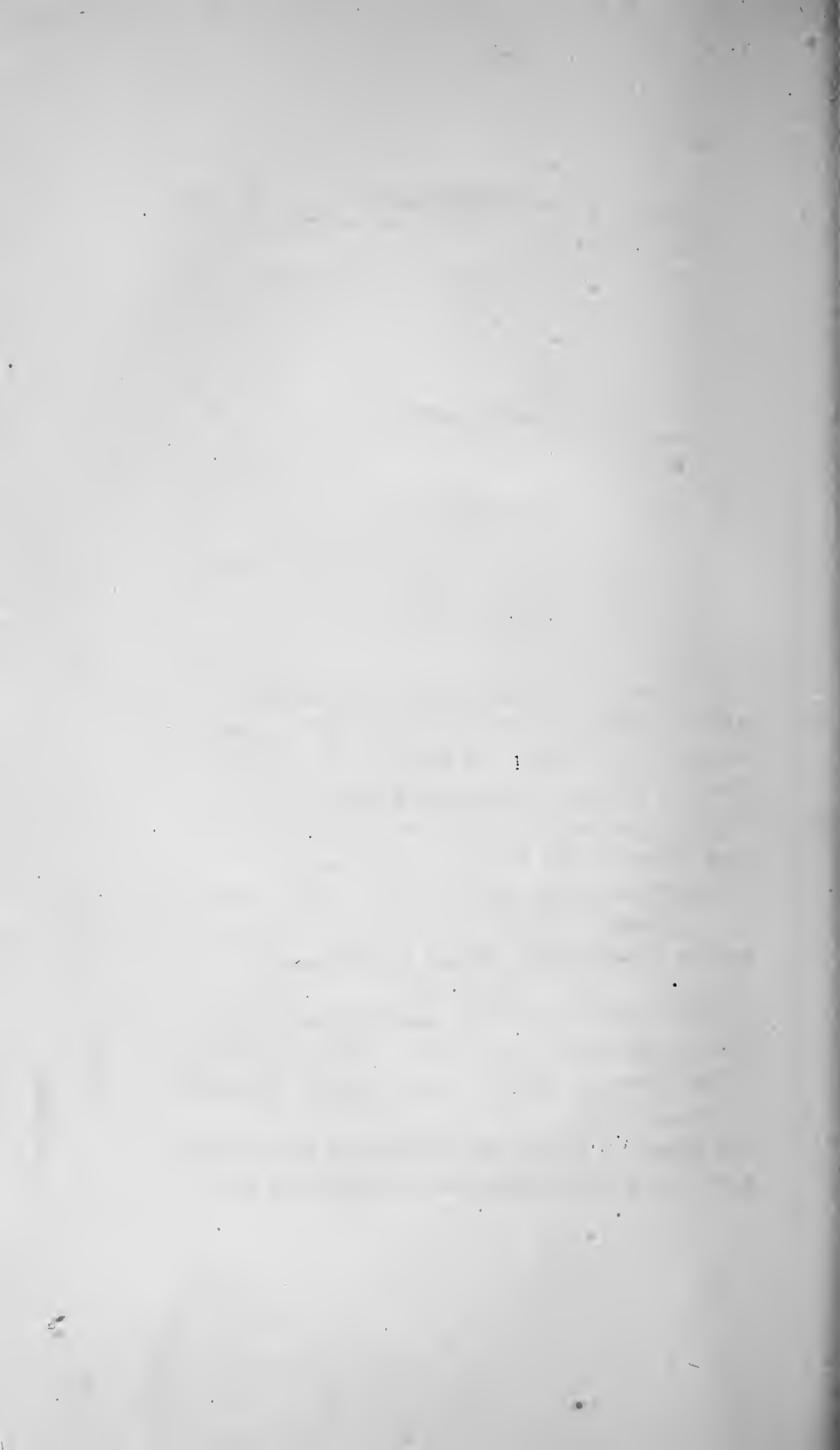
But he who singly dares
To some high purpose,—he is deaf and blind
 To all save God and duty.
 Only in him lives Beauty,
And these beatitudes of faith and fact;
In him alone the conscious power to act
 When all the coward World despairs.

Lo! he must grind
Like Agonistes till his potent hairs
Whiten; and the sweet milks of Christ-like
 grace—
Love tokened for this freedman race—
Curdle with man's lack-charity and spleen.
 Alas! to him—

This brave pearl-fisher of the mind—
This wonder-seeker through the dark Unseen :
This world is all a lie till Truth embrace
The purpose of his days ;
Till with a soldier's logic he may brim
This cup of aching hemlock, and grown face
to face
With heaven, lo, all his iron ways
Are praise-wise changed into a hero's hymn
Lifting from the Unseen whence shall arise
The prophets of the future. Love,
Whate'er it touches, purifies.
The thinker in his sovereign office stands
One and alone. Victory ! wear thou the iron
glove
Of Labor. Let the solemn sands
In thy hour-glass be drops of hero's blood :
Turn them to gold anon,
Counted all-priceless current coin of heaven,
Thrice-reverenced upon
The hearth-stone of a nation ; and let flood
The 'plauding rain upon that lifted brow ;
So let the proud world kneel—even as I do now.

Zoroaster

Venice.—1885.



Prooaster :

A MONOLOGUE.

BOOK FIRST.

An honest will bra, e-sired of Solitude,
And by huge purpose mothered till it pries
Forth from the skull of sable-armèd Jove,
Even as Pallas to the rugged noon—
Lo, this the God-refined and holy milk
The Titans of the truth of upper arcs
Teem their young gods upon: their virtues
 shape
Apt to the conquest on the void Eterne.

And hath not man this synod of the Law
Been honored ear and voice? Deny him not,
Sweet heaven! while yet a prayer prevails
 from earth;
For man may pluck the wormwood of his state
And cast it fiendward; thus the general hue

And trump of criminal gain forswear,
And be a man, god-fellow and a king—
Aye, e'en in this meek frailty—a god ;
And when great manhood speaks, let angels
 halt
E'en in the mid-pitch of their supple boast,
And harken.

The kind Earth that nurtured me
To this high state, forsakes me at the breach ;
The dead world wrings rebellion on my soul—
Strange mutinies of complex hate, with scorn
Full-teemed of hell's contagion in mens' eyes,
With Effort templed on her offspring dead—
These, by man's crimson rigors of reproach,
Have made a god of me in hard resolve,
Till my last wisdom is my first ; and all
Is summed on solitude.

I was a child
Most supple and eager to the natural Light ;
By unapproachèd nature a soft heart
Repentant and to better oath most staid.
Wisdom took ancient virtue, as a seer's
Bowed venerable in the apparelled age,
Breathing forth light in golden homily,
Till Truth, ail touchstone Beauty at its core,
Rose and proved blessed to my kneeling faith.
I loved the world, and bore in sacrifice

My whole heart's duty to endue mankind
Most graciously. I took my people's stone
And bane-drunk idols,—these phantasmal lies
That men mart heaven to over-reach and fawn
With flatteries like lapping toads,—the while
Cursers of circumstance themselves have bred,
Kissing the heels of carrion Ignominy,
To pluck a sleeper of her qualities ;
And even on my iron palms, these gods
Full-orbed in minion eyes, withered to dust,
Even as Sodom apples into ash :
Their deities of bubble days, and lo !
My heart so schooled saw Pity yield the more,
In an absolving charity, till now
With these sweet tokens of our frail disguise—
These weeds commiserate of stoic pomps
Bent to the rigorous reach of certain fate,
I lived and learned, and as a prophet stood.
Whate'er their faults, men were my compeers
still.

These were my brothers—these pale churchyard
game

Stillborn at birth—meek carrion with tongues,
Companions still of every lifting thought,
And every daring to the perfect true.
I loved them thrice in our commutual task—
This task half true, half false—easing the
wound

Of heaven called 'life' healed but of death and worms.

But I have grown greater than creeds of hated ;
My sun hath pinned the noon, and I revolt
Against the pricks of the conforming bribe—
Against that gilded pawn which dares unprop
The sweetest arts of men to baser use,
And e're my panting season shall be set,
Swear forth my solitude and there be free.
Men have esteemed my place in formal marts :
But what avails ? I was not born to buy
And sell the God's sweet alchemy ; and so
Knowing no other creed than labor, still
Have bent my full-teemed argument at large
Against all surface logic, schooling well
My purpose to the art, my conscious soul
Superior to this scoffer's impious proof
To things approved divine. Let the cant-dogs
Of these fiend perturbations bay and howl
Beside the midnight altars of my creed,
Making a hybrid scourge of all that feels
And so hath kin with me. I stand with heaven
Commatural and true. I've looked mens' eyes
And through those lidded windows forced
amain

This analyzing solvent of my sires,
Parting the man-god from the mutinous dusts:
The gold from proud hearts' criminal alloys.
Loved them and honored most approvingly,

★

Yet voicing on the midnight of my faith
A language understood of gods, not these.
I made my habitation fast amid
These younglings of the jugglers' stratagem,
With heart a general hypocrite, in voice
Cowed of opinion to the bane-dogs' bark ;
And yet within me, signaled Godward still,
By right armed daring and anointed eyes
I stood, a priest of temples unprofaned,
Alms-asking nothing of the bowed world's weal,
Propped on my heart by rugged faith and fire,
Unknelt of milken knaves, and ne'er oppressed
Of fools that damn but do not understand.

Men sought me out and braved me even here,
Regioned of thoughts untreasoned of the lie
Of common pomp with smiles concealing hell:
Here, in the bowels of the jungle swart,
Content to drink the air the beast exhales.
I tracked God's footstep through the midnight
maze

Of cold philosophies,—on, on, o'er bogged
And weedy knaveries of random creeds
Kissed black with Custom's curse. Men sought
me out

And found me full of thoughts. From that
large hour

Of youth and valiance, when first solitude
Made giant of me, and an infant sun

In the god-regioned capitols of Truth
Where manhood stands translated,—from that
dream

Whence I arose in my youth's over-zeal
To do and be what lesser deities
Match as with wooing friends, my constant arm
Hath been unfaltering poised with every oath
The First and Last gives honor. Men were
mine

To search, and thrice abidingly befriend.
Herein was I new-armored, and was thence
No longer he my mother would have sworn
Her son in pregnant feature, and my sire
Saw his sweet look reflected in ; for there
Upon the midmost borders of the gods
I lost my kin identity : became
E'en as a humble villager of heaven. My life
A dual life at heart : incarnate yet
By import spiritual pride-proof and free—
Dead, yet alive ; asleep yet ever-waking.
I took my brothers' hands and read their griefs
As reverend music, and so bowed their ways ;
But in the midmost effort of my zeal,
I knew no kin at heart. And even so
My life upon men's palms was still unread ;
And they forswore the bowl that smelt of bane
To their unschoolèd wits, though 't was, in
truth,
The nectar of the gods. From that large hour

How was I levered of new-solving law—
That law by which o'er wormwood Chaos fell
Light and sweet Triumph! Thus walked I the
earth,
Imaging Night of neutral blasphemy
'Pon which the arrowy Morn from unseen bow
Pried to the socket and the God revealed.

I grew to manhood mettlesome and grave,
With heart o'er-brewed of love—that vital milk
Repeopling skulls with wisdom, and the tomb
Wherein sit all the dreads of saint or seer,
With somewhat of true majesty. And she—
Ah, she my best beloved—alas! how strange,
Kissed soft my task with recognizing glance,
Pressing my bosom as if even there
That throbbing was my heart, that breast my
breast,
And my sad soul star-harvesting beyond
E'en those love-breathing eyes, were really
there.
And then I turned and wept, clenching my
hand
Upon that mad unrest where panting throbs
Forced the swift gall through every sickened
vein,
And cried into the gaping ears of heaven :
'Alas, what madman's puppetry is this
Wherein I play the prophet and the fool—

The one to heaven, the other unto men !'
But this dead prayer fell false, and on my heart
Was answered of the silence that speaks shame
Upon all prayer conjured of selfish weal.

I wandered many lands and tempted seas
That swept strange tongues upon their emer-
ald lips;
And yet I felt them kindred, for they knew—
At least so fond I flattered me—they knew
How from this unrespected, base-born state
I rose, and, purposed to prevail, so dared.
Mild Nature knew me, and I knelt to none
Of earth or stars to cry my substance forth
In her recording eyes. How rent I then
The lust-yoke that enslaved me to men's ways,
And all the sensual reins and leagues with
Vice—
How broke I forth from these, and plunged
up, up,
Through the star-ridden deeps that bared their
breasts
Unto my touch of wonder and resolve !
How from my kindreds' bier I turned away,
Wondering if they knew me now ; and if
By this sweet metamorphosis of heaven,
Death had not ope'd their eyes to read aright
My undisclosing ways, and bow my creed
In honor for its purposed earnestness

If for no vaster import. Thus, thus I pressed
My prayerful steps through my first father's
halls

Rich in magnificence—since Nature now
Was home, and hearth, and comforter—still
straying

Where'er the touch of Love hath changed to
music

The children of the elements,—the woods,
The snow-embalmed peaks and mitred vales,
The sea-republic and the cloistered stars,
And the divining, benedictive Night
Whisp'ring with subtilest speech : ' Take faith,
O Prophet !—

The Morrow shall bend down, and from thy lips
Drink all thy sovereign spirit's bursting forth,
And honor thee thy prayer !' Yet Morrow
came

All willing ears ; and still for language-lack,
I was unheard, unknown. And each on each
Was hoarded slave-like in the sullen past—
Reproachful Yesterdays that mocked my prayer.
' Is this the heritage of heaven ?' I cried,
' A soul sheathed up in some dry husk where
now

The steel that Truth hath tempered fit for wars
For some celestial chieftom, rusts within
This calloused, carrion mask of sordid ashes ?
Ye open wounds ! are ye the recompense

For so much daring toward the unseen God?
Ye smarting heart-throbs! bleed ye forth the
hours

That match our mortal Destinies who stand
Mocking with silence thrice more eloquent,
These eloquent prayers? If this be so,
Then let me clench my palms upon this beating
Which so profanes my days, and with one fierce
Convincing action, rend these stubborn seals
That bound such false assumption, prying out
The beggar-thing of peril prisoned fast
Within the aching void, and so to sleep,—
Die into life that crystallizes error
To something god-begotten on the noon—
A somewhat beautiful that shall not perish.'

Thus Nature ever jealous, ever true
To that stern creed whereby men prove them-
selves,
Would bid us languish in her haloed look,
Or dream upon her lap the cloud-god's dream,
Yet be so surfeited of her caress,
Refined speech and ocean-heaving love,
That it were an ordeal grave yet sublime,
To shoulder on the faith this extreme creed,
Turning creation into thoughts, heaping
Their bulks almighty on a frail-born babe.
Ambition to high purpose be my curse;
But such a curse as proves itself with heaven,

And finds its cure in more ambition still.
This life-long virtue is a god's disease
'T were sacrilege to ease : a malady
That all the starry leech-craft could not heal,
Since remedy be death. 'T is as a wound
Inflicted by our mother, or by one
For whom we would lay down our willing lives
Nor deem her criminal, and fallen so,
Die martyr to the ailment we so cherish.
Is this an incorruption in high faith :
The sanctity of honor and the seal
Of chief divinity, or is 't a plague
Heaping the spirit's treasure-house with ores
Beyond this finite province to sustain
And mint into God's currency? Is 't health
In some divine assumption, or a scourge
Which purifies erewhile, that unto me
All things lift over-ponderous with thoughts,
Each, mother of a panting galaxy
Of star-dreams fervent, till the arc bleeds fire;
While I walk earth as one that shoulders up
Some meteor of heaven on my faith,
Yet call it blessed and am silent so.

My heart was born of flame. At my soul's
touch

The woods uprose a parliament of seers,
Hoary with oracles and templed lores ;
Each unto each with interclasping arms,

Bound brother to brother in one knowledge
grave :

And I, poor wight of this God-yoked desire,
Walked in their midst and opened all my heart,
Ten thousand ears prone to their trenchant
words—

Words like to love-lutes on the summer seas,
Or that stern utterance when winter winds
Rouse them to mutiny. To my soul's eyes
The flowers hung over-natured of their sweets,
Till with divine intemperance they swooned,
Embowered in their cycles, with warm brows
Hung heavy with a golden luxury
Of hue and form and image rare, till they
Grew too profound for natural thought, and
died.

To my soul's touch the music of the sea
When headlong winds o'er-swept it as their lyre
Flung up the sapphired phantasy to heaven,
An oracle espoused of virtues bold,
Prompting their sagest stratagems, and shamed
Old Ocean green with jealousy that Earth
Should boast such open ears. At my soul's
touch

The seasons rose as epochs whence did Truth
Map forth a new career to joy mankind;
Founding a new philosophy within
The heart of thinking man till he be strong
In self-subduing quality to reason—

A sin-child but in name. To my soul's sight
The years were an anointed brotherhood
That linked me closer heaven with clasped
hands,

And with their parting kiss bearing my prayer.
They were the bridging Destinies that spanned
These gulfs of doubt and death,—the mitred
priests

At the pale altars of the templed heart,
Performing each their sanguine rite of love,
Then, by the edict of supream Will,
Making pale off'rings of these sin-bleached
bones,

Gathering up the dust to call it blessed.
Years are the praying elements, whose prayers
In graving unity are driven up
Beyond the sky-shores of Creation. These,
Sweet intercessions 'twixt the foul and fair,
Lift our libations to the topmost grace,
Alms-suppliant of peace. At my soul's touch
The earth and air, and the thanksgiving deeps
Of heaven profound with secrets absolute
And hallowed from the touch profane of men,
Yea, all the peopled areas, God-struck
To law rebellious save to that command,—
These sisterhoods of virtue-proving loves,
Wreathed of flushed amaranth—the sesame
Of life perpetuate : these sensate truths,
Oracular of God, no longer stand

Mysterious before this able search,
But each is sovereign of an empire rich
In thoughts proportioned to availing arms,
And their large issues are the god-sires all
Of that I feel and shadow in my scripture.
And I am thus their child—their firstling faith
Instructed in the parent reverence,
By brazen discipline learning the truth
Till I am coeternal with that same
I so exalting kissed. And last, oh God,
Yet even nearest to that infant couch
Whereon these aspirations ribbed of naught
But cradling faith and futures, dreamful lie,—
In my soul's eyes the God in all mankind—
This the immortal wedlock of that love
I drew down from the topmost weal of heaven,
The musings of the Charities with souls
They dare to edify and exercise
Into most perfect saintship. This the art
Interpreting the conflict faltering
Into its true estate, beyond the wars
Of triflers that o'ertop the mounted suns.
Herein am I God-sceptred to command;
For men to me in each warm character
Of these unshamed revealings of the heart,
Are music made so tangible it thinks,
And teaches me do likewise ; and with ears
And eyes a-strain to feed my nature sway,
I seek out each twin mote that is revealed

When the true sunshift opens on its breast
And parts the cloud before my yearning eyes.
Thus am I taught, and this would teach again.
Oh God! how much of heaven that men deem
base—

Crime's load-star siren to the rack of hell—
Forever unredeemed.

And this to me
Is all my life stands judgment: to be true
To that intuitive which far transcends
The God-most reach of mind, and faithful
proven
To that revealed art whereby my life
Prays Truth-ward up thus to endue mankind,
So stand transformed a prism of the pure,
The just, the worthy, throwing radiance
Upon the sordid text of man's dead scriptures,
Immortal and sustaining, till this night
Opaque with depths misdeemed eternity,
Lift as abiding rainbows from our sleep,
And peace make home where now breeds bit-
terness.

I sought my temple on the upper peaks
Mid the laborious airs, where call the clouds
Their snowy sisterhoods to councils huge.
There, purposed of this creed, I homed my heart
To be revived by grief in love

More perfect and abiding. There to be
By discord taught the master-seal of song ;
By sorrow, piety ; and solitude
To think as the wide-voicing elements
Who stand repugnant to the trifler's arts ;
I rear my altars where no mutiny
Of man's tyrannic lust can mock my prayers,
Nor mingle the malignance of the cynic
With this divinity so God-espoused,
And so pray on unceasingly. My poor heart
Ascends in the oblation, prompting up
These thoughts supine into redeemed air,
As clouds up from the censer-vales at even,
And there swoon back upon their element—
Peace of all peace in like embraced of like.
But here in this dead archive of the mount,
I bless my habitation, such as man
As man—oh, not as god, must home his heart ;
And while my spirit chases starward still,
Dragging its fiery car through the inane
And opaque counter-whiles of Time and Tide,
Should'ring their mountainous secrets, I remain
Where flesh must still prevail and thirst
 appeased
By dint of misery—my soul's god-sire.
I call upon the forests, and with shriek
On shriek upvoicing, dare them to the law
That made them mighty. 'Have ye too,
 aspired ?—

O ye swart-ribbed, primaval seers ! and so
Are now my proven brethren ?' But they
stand,

And in dumb pity shake their milken tops,
And hiss : 'Thou fool !' and I am answered so.
Then turn I from the legislative woods—
That family of Titans, breathing life
Into these babes of phantasy and fear—
Those kings I court, yet who feel not with me
When I am over-weaned of headlong grief
Supple in fool's philosophy and shame,
And with a faith-enduing voice that tincts
My whole wrought being with its rich applause,
Cry to the open-eared, ambitious cloud :

'Ye peace-born children of the matron Morn !
Eaves-droppers of heaven !—ye frail sister-
hoods

Of vestals in the frock and livery
Of light about this mountain's skiey hearth !—
Oh have ye not to gain this sweeping state—
This orb-eclipsing, sky-prevailing reach
Of beauty, from the damps of earth aspired ?
Have ye not wrung from under-circumstance
Your capable pitch of awe ? Have ye not rent
The trammels of some custom trite, or law
By knaves conjured to keep young Effort down
In their damned midst, and cringe her lawful
babes

Before some tyrant effigy? Have ye
To kiss the zenith, paid your weight in woe,
That from the hoar pretensions of the world,
Ye dare stand rank amid these shelved stars!
Speak, speak, ye bent-browed ministers!'

But nay;
There hang they still—the pendant pearls that
clasp

The neck of heaven, changeful at the cheek
Chameleon-like, and I am answered so.
Then closer still I hood my mantle down
Upon this vanquished and perturbed shape,
And creep into my cave, housing the bowels
Of this imperious crag, whose beetling front
In wedgèd helmet midway to the moon,
Keeps up his starry war to clinch his state
Beyond invade of super-eminence.
Lo! I have found a wound upon his side,
Gored by the horns of some behemoth foe;
And I have probed it even to the vitals
Where I may list these solemn workings still,
Deep in this rock-ribbed heart that fires no pulse.
And here I kneel me by my rude, rude shrine,
Counting the throbs of Nature with sweet
tongues

In every beat, through the conjuring days.
Then with a voice tuned to meek gratitude,
In my heart's hardship, and with tenting eyes

Wedging the solemn mountain-bulk beyond
I pray :

‘O thou that dost so solemnize
The ordinance of Nature in thy pale
Dead cerements of ages!—chief of all
These vaulting boasts that pedestal the earth!
Yearn ye with thoughts that I too may not
think?—
Feelings beyond the compass of my vein—
Tragedies that I may not act again
In travail to like precedence,—on, on,
Through the upbattling ranks of things that
browse
The unrepentant sods? Can ye not list
These heart-throbs snatching reason e’en from
hell
To slave them in their purpose, and be made
A consecration to my leaping thought,
As I unto that all-preceding Will
Which wrenched you from mal-shapen dross
and heaved
Your pale tiaras to the vested stars?—
Call me by name, and by the virgin truth,
Thy mountain-sired son? Oh part ye now
The avenues into that secret nave
Wherein is locked thy vantage-seal of triumph.
And let me cast my bitter self thereon
In one enshrinement purposed to endure,

O Truth ! thy right-armed Doer still for aye.'

But on this tide of emulative zeal
And bowed humility, in stubborn war
To pry the secret from the rugged ribs
That bound his triumph, the staid Morn-god
lifts

E'en from his infirm sleep, shaking his locks
In scorn-beard passion, and I kneel me meek
At his huge couch, bleeding as bleed the
Hours

That hang as curses on the neck of Jove.
God seals the pearl of Triumph : the great law
Of life is but the laboring toward that law
Which but of heaven becomes our heritage.
True aspiration is its own sweet meed,
And toil in toil finds the chief victory.
We strive for that we dare not take to heart
When at the last 't is safe within our reach ;
But ever push it onward, calling down
Peril, disaster, darkness in the rift
Betwixt the gloating eyes and all it would,
To prove the hero greater than the victor—
The martyr, god ; the conqueror mere man.

Once in my youth, long, long ago—for now
Though scarce a greybeard, I have truthwise
grown

By grave experience a patriarch
In charity that bows sweet kin to heaven—

I had a brother whose unconscious soul
Threw such a radiance on mortality,
'T was like the twilight on a leaden cloud
Falling, with benedictive kiss of peace
Transforming it to triumph, light, and joy.
His coming was like rain to th' parching flowers
That swooned on th' vital noon with swollen
 lips—

The brave incarnate answering of heaven
To prayers for heroes to deliver Truth
From th' trifler's sophistry. He died ; and death
Came as a dream to some entranced sleeper,
To me transforming the strange Why of life
To wonder-oracles, grave, meaningful,
Austere and new, and my sick soul was dumb.
Yet in that oracle where I had read
More of my days' allegiance to their oath
Than my meek life gave argument, I found
My true, my second and unsolvèd self
In one all-chief resolve to do and be.
That friend a new religion taught my days ;
A creed graver than lip-worship,—a speech
That joy, and shame, and hope, and grief,
 aye, all

Rebellious the yearning lip, out-wits not
In travail to be free,—speech that out-acts
The pitch of words set in their stubborn teeth,
Silent as symbols to the tender ears.
The elders of the legislative Morn

And Even penitent,—these heard and honored.
By this rich, mutual language was I brought
So face to face with pioneering Law,
That in these border parallels of Truth
I was commutual ; aye, though but youth—
A simple child of child's unsifted whims
Built for expansion by grave exercise
Of judgment, reason, and presiding worth.
I read much but I pondered more ;
Resolving by the simplest threads of thought,
That to the mind of impress clean and clear,
All things find argument in Nature first ;
Books are mere second sight. Therefore, I read
But as a principle that seeks its own,
And but with principles will take up friend,
Housed with the few—but the almighty few.
Reading merely for the reading's sake,
Infuses mental leprosy which gnaws
That subtile gossamer tentioned profound,
Which catches the vibrations of the still
Swift voice that but the list'ning prophet hears.
Like meteor, I read the Milky Way
Of booklore, snatching and absorbing deep
Within me, spirit, mood, proclivities,
Rather than meedless matter and stone wit ;
Sapping each fruit of all its prodigal soul,
Kissing the husk with thanks. Each infused
Their individual element of virtue.
The carrion bulk of that I harvested

I threw into the pits, since I had brewed
From their sweet excellence that potion rich
Which so avails me now, and which, in turn,
'T is mine to mint to modern medium—
New current of these antique ores of ages.
Mid these refinèd arts—these embryon
Cogent by reason of their leverage
On Nature's seal unbroken, I was king,
Demanding light from darkness obdurate,
Till from the East an advent sun uplifts
In answering attributes. And thus to me
To be alone was to be best companioned.
I never found a friend so great, so true
As one brave, kingly, solitary thought.
To be alone was to be banqueted
By the god-thoughts that cringe no alms of men,
Nor kiss their trip condition. Thus if I
By right forsook men at their feasting pomps,
'T was but to prove how greater far the gods
Respect man even in his follies yoked,
Than man respects himself.

But now, alas,
The threading dream grows slender, and these
still,
Swift thoughts are flagging in their latitudes,
Bidding me from the temple where this rite
Hath been performed devoutly to my cause.
Lo! I must to the peaks, and by the hour

When the primeval sun shall rise and meet
Its worshipper upon that wholesome seat,
Then shall I pray to be new-reigned of faith,
And press God's token firmer. So, adieu!--
Thou city of great dreams, where hate, nor
 lust,

Nor aught of the unclean-born can prevail.
Adieu! and thou the guardian at the gates
Of every castled Honesty, arise,
And press these keys unto thy fervent lips,
Sealing from aught profane this holy place
Wherein I kneel and Truth there names me
 'God-child!'

Prooaster :

BOOK SECOND.

Ambition is the mind's eternal youth ;
And to pure purpose 't is the vestal oil
That keeps the altar-flame upon the heart
A faith-star through the dim benighted years.
Let not this nurse of states die like pale whims
Upon the brow of the young Palmer ; nay,
By brawn assault and arts most equal matched,
Wring citadels from sly rebellious Time,
And change them into sanctuaries all.
Each honest purpose is a consecrate
And vested temple of divine To-be ;
And brave thoughts are the priests that should
abide—
Bowed rites of chastity and armored trust
Forged error-proof for mastership eterne.

The seal is on my heart, and I have sworn
To an oblation by the early sun ;
So, passive to this charge, have whipped me on
O'er mobled crag and heap laborious
Of stony gods swooned back on flattered Chaos,
On, up from earth into this peerest pitch—
High o'er the wrecks of earthquake violence
Ragged, convulsion-rent in impious rage
Confounded to the pits,—fierce fragments
 strewn

Of Nature's firstling heart. Here have I toiled
To press my couch of prayer where nearest
 heaven

These phantasies may bridge more fervently
The reach 'twixt faith and all it honors so.
And thou, O lifting Monitor of eld !—
Seer of Creation's creed, who from the East
Hath made one sweet religion of the world—
A faith whose rite is Beauty and the True—
Sun of all suns ! discourse thou to my soul,
And ye unsandaled, reverend crags ! give ear.

Thou heaven-shouldering Orb of life and
 light !—

Peace ! let me learn thy sainted Mother's name.
Astride art thou the pitch of sovereignty,
The rainbowed hearth of the partaking stars,—
Umpire of all archangel reasoning
That doth profound the planets ! thus my hand

Stretches forth over tidal seas, benight
Of dumb mortality, but thou art there !
Ah ! who of earth hath dreamt that at one Voice
This pulse that mutinies the throbbing space
Reeling with moons and galley-slaving stars—
Fair dominions pendant in the breach—
At one great Hest these orbit-chasing worlds
Halt in their pilgrimage and hood their brows,
And this o'er-pompous effigy of heaven
We dare call 'Earth,' and Nature naked-palmed,
And Power and Purpose and the fertile womb
Of Space primordial,—all unsandaled stand
In this tranfixed and eternal noon,
There in one brotherhood are bowed and dumb,
While One still greater tasks them of their day.
The generations pass but in my hand
Lay all their fallen seals, and snail them down
Through the swift Shades black-forged of eager
Death,
Impalpable e'en to a bane-god's touch !
Then up from clenched vaults of steeded suns,
Rise forth the children of Creation—they
Who exorcise the fiended Night, and take
These forest-numbering seasons by the hand
Pointing their task and toil, and from these
strewn
And broken fragments of the mortal war—
The fouled annihilation of the fair—
Lift forth a purpose and a thing availing.

The twilight harp doth vibrate to thy nod,—
Thou light-anointed vigil of the years!
The vales are censers and the stubborn breath
Ascends up from the blue depths yearningly,
And each pale atom in the frosten eve—
Each prayerful fairy-world of lifting dew,
Crowds round its hearth a household of sweet
dreams

Love-lifted into loveliness. By this
Supreme enforcement, even so my heart
Lifts forth its penitence, and hails thee so;
Compels from shapeless night hymeneal Morn,
Charging the heart the seal of never-sleep.

The sun is forth from the cloud-peopled
East—

Out of his urn where for a thousand years
Methinks he hath been castled, and that night
Which on my life hath marked an era led
Forth from Ambition's epoch, ebbs away,
As if the breath of anarchy hung spent
In the envenomed air. Once more pale Earth
So babe-like cribbed upon the purple Morn,
Stands augury and bids me to my task—
This God-rite virtual manifest herein.

Hail! offspring of the plentitude of heaven—
First-born of Eld, in aerial empires cribbed,
And by thy equal godship proven thrice

Commatural with th' one ascendant Soul
That feeds the days and years their spiritual
 breath,
And Progress with sweet weal ! Abide with me,
And let thy mutual lamp of mellow oils
Illume the purport of these lifting steps.
Oh, thou most grave resolved as witness-chief
Of all that perishes and from decay
Invokes Eternity ! if I am wrong
In vaunting to be heard in this mad war
Of Change impetuous and headlong plunge
Of Progress to its pitch : if I may boast
A voice that penetrates, 'mid volt on volt
Of the unbridled circumstance, the heart
Of this material creed of days and deeds :
If I, like famished wolf invoking moons,
Stand at the capitol and touch the heavens
With unrebelligious dare,—oh, hear my vow !
And take these sheaves of harvest penitence,
Leaving my open palms to argue forth
From Night some virtual love, from Day some
 law,
Waging still starward with a certain meed
In self-rewarding excellence of effort.

I walked the earth the shadow of a god
Who in high realms amiss, was hither cast
To do some blood-rheum penance, high re-
 solved—

Some sufferance in hectic expiation
For crime thought forth upon the craving arc,
By devils labored and by hell given stage
In impious tragedy. The sons of men,
Named me their prophet as a teemless trope
Or plaything with the counter-seal of hell
Upon its birth-rank. I was crossed and toiled
By every shape that bore the brand of error
Upon its brazen temple, and was flung
Into the midst of Crime-dogs browed of shame
That feeds on Innocence. Experience
Instilled its world of malice,—brackish cup,
And scorn sly-slippered as the witted fiends,
Thrusting me to the forests to abide
As one that lost his kinship unto men,
And sought that amply proven to the gods.
I was a twilight pilgrim through the night
Of aspen commonality—this stretch
Of sordid gain by gamesters confiscate.
Lamped by one sorry torch to lead the blind,
I labored on and on, and grew to think
These hardened retributions of the gods
Upon this slave mortality not all
The vow to heaven called 'life.' I learned to
look
Upon the tragic discord of this state
With eyes untranced of sanguine-lipped ro-
mance ;
But like some ministration of good cheer,

I folded meekly o'er these crimson fields
Of spectral-armed debauch, a certain touch
Of the absolving graces all-redeeming.
In my faith-humbled and all-conquered heart
I found more true religion than in creeds ;
By solitude more manifest, the truth,
Rather than 'mid the murmurings of men.
And so I labored and so labor now,
Ever forever upward, onward still
Into the peerest climax of the rift
Through which all heaven smiles ; and by this
 skill
Made bold to kindle on the offended breach
In nature some most adequate avail—
Some quality of love yet undisclosed.

Now must I lay me low, and on this heap
Of reeds rude-plaited take my dreamless
 draught.
This poor old ruin of a stalwart pride—
This ledge of reason which breaks abruptly
Where the abyss beneath is night and death,—
This riven brow fretted of dead men's wrongs
And the forgetfulness of living loves—
Now Nature doth requite in kindly sleep.

A young and fervent voice up from the
 deeps—
More like the passing of a silver cloud

Before the pensive moon, awakens me ;
The keen air now grows tremulous with words
I feel yet hear not, so soft-voiced are they.
Ye reeling altitudes of form and feature
Immeasurably parted on my sight!—
How beautiful are ye ! I kiss my chains
Kneeling with thanks before the tyrant rod
That makes so sweet and fond a serf of me.
And now that voice hath grown articulate.
Pale, trunkless phantoms pass—weird min-
isterings
Beckoned on sleep from dawn-day increate.
And now take they a subtiler phase—these
calm
Fair voicings of Almighty wish and weal—
Empyrean law in godlike discourse bound.
My heart 's aflame ; lo ! forth from the dead urn
Of this sin-knotted, grave mortality
I am led forth into the ampler air,
Propitious browed, of this new reason lamped:

‘ The moments are the pearls that bead the
neck
Of the all-peerless Jove : they fall from heaven,
That angels and the sons men may make
An equal harvest. Thus to thy exacting God
Thy life is matched with angels to like
purport.’

‘Eternity cribs Heaven and Earth in one
God-teemful Infinite. All bound within
This orbèd circle of divine emprise
Bears mutual relation ; and the zones
That gird these arcs in like resources matched.

‘Boast not of wisdom ; for thy utmost wit
Spans but a mote. All, all beyond, before :
The veil is not yet lifted—thou art blind.
Death only is the prism of the truth
That cuts the incorporate void, and proves the
core
Brimming with rainbows promiseful of peace.
Hence, fear not death ; it is the oracle.’

‘Law points the orbits of the spheried stars,
And to this ordination are they fixed.
Ye are like bondsmen to thy laws of being :
Abide ye in their hest, and they in you.’

‘An angel’s moment is a man’s made sure ;
The world hath need of thee, or thou wert yet
With darkness increate. Fulfil thy oath :
This stern birth obligation, for ’t is writ
In God’s sure language in thy mother’s blood:
Respect it, oh, respect it, Son of Truth !’

‘Work thou hast scorned undone, no man
shall do ;

What gods leave unperformed no gods proceed.

E'en angels by their labors are made chief.'

'Thy soul is upward-arrowed from the grave;
The spent bow falls, and never shall it speed
Another arrow to another heaven.
Therefore, attain thy soul's majority ;
Thou shalt not here return to flatter wrong
Into avail, or with a suppliant kiss
Right thy frail-armed offense, for these stand
sealed.'

'The sun arms thee thy power ; the night
gives rest ;
The earth, thy couch ; the stars, thy coverlet.
They all are portions of that brotherhood
Of which thou art a link. Repute them not
With crime ; for these ascribing elements
Breathe wrath ; and they may turn to scourges
swift
Upon thy reptile ways and wring the shame.'

'A star runs rebel to its law : it falls ;
A tree repugnant to its office, dies ;
The armored days of duty unfulfilled,
Yoked with a curse, stand coward at the
breach
Upon the God's expectancy. A man

But snails his duty, his delinquent soul
Into damnation withers to the hilt.'

' The Whirlwinds flag not ; 't is their charge
to pass ;
The Seasons stay not : 't is their death to halt ;
The Hours—they slumber not ; and man's
great heart
Here pendulums the still eternity :
Each stroke is numbered—it must be fulfilled.'

' Tis gone, and as the music of the gods,
Making sweet war on the pulsating whiles,
Leaves a celestial wake. Up, up, my spirit !—
Thou wert of a snail mock-parented.
To paint thy powers on the rut-ridden dusts.
Up, up, and let the gates of high applause
Swing wide upon thee, nor let viprous scorn,
Nor bisson hate, nor malice scorpion-clawed
Swerve thee from thy preoption proved elect.

The tempests are thy scourgers till by scourge
Right-handed abler thou hast clenched and
flung
Their furies to the wastes,—lo ! then they serve.
The elements turn rebel till by thrice
More keen philosophy and brawnier blade,
Thou hast made slaves of them,—lo ! then they
serve.

The mitred Night, thy ancient pillory,—
Thy first traducer, and the iron heel
On battered Fortune, else sweet as success :
Till by thy lash of light thou hast whipped
 down

This scourge impenitent, and seen the blush
Of conscious shame upon the early East—
And then she serves. And thus all attributes
And laws of human or of heaven perforce,
Which at the vital onset seem to bear
Withholding resource to thy arm, and pass
Mock judgment on thy cynic cavers,—
To bribe thy pilot and beshrew thy cause,
Turn and befriend him whose respect they have.
The tears of bowed mankind make brackish all
The nectars of the gods that rain to earth,
In which we are baptised. But there are they
Who by a sovereign alchemy at heart,
Do crystallize these tears to pearls of price,
Till these usurping griefs are Godwise changed
To offices of beauty, valiance, love—
Matched for a star-bride's coronation. Yea,
This is a brief-dawn while, but one of purpose,
Save to the graspèd groat, or th' lust-blind
 babes

In second weaning from the pap of wolves ;
And that brave resource lifts its wholesome rule
From the within ; and if 't is proven not,

Nature is shamed, and Truth knows one more
sorrow.

Peace! the swift orbs are swimming in
amaze,

And darkness is made mortal throughout all
The poison cores of hate, and Love now lives.
Oh ye divine-voiced, crystal-hearted things
Cynics misdeemed the star-mists of the mind:
Sweet rhapsodies of mellow offering
To heaven,—sons of wisdom opulence
Out-armèd by no angel breadth of doing!—
O Nature, so remembering to them
Who have thee done slight honor in the deed
By quickened faith so bold of zealous will!—
Ye Time-seers born of the Undreamed,—
Unkown!—

Who, bald of passion for a fool's applause,
Vaunting no excellence, mete out your dogged
And most repugnant offices!—Ye sweet
And virgin Triumphs, with God-kissing eyes
Sounding the measure of my poor dead heart,
With sylvan cheer upon your tempering
brows—

I am your palmer hence!—your lover made
By these antagonists of scorn-bred eyes,
And tongues that swear down hatred in my
path,
More ardently a prophet in my quest.

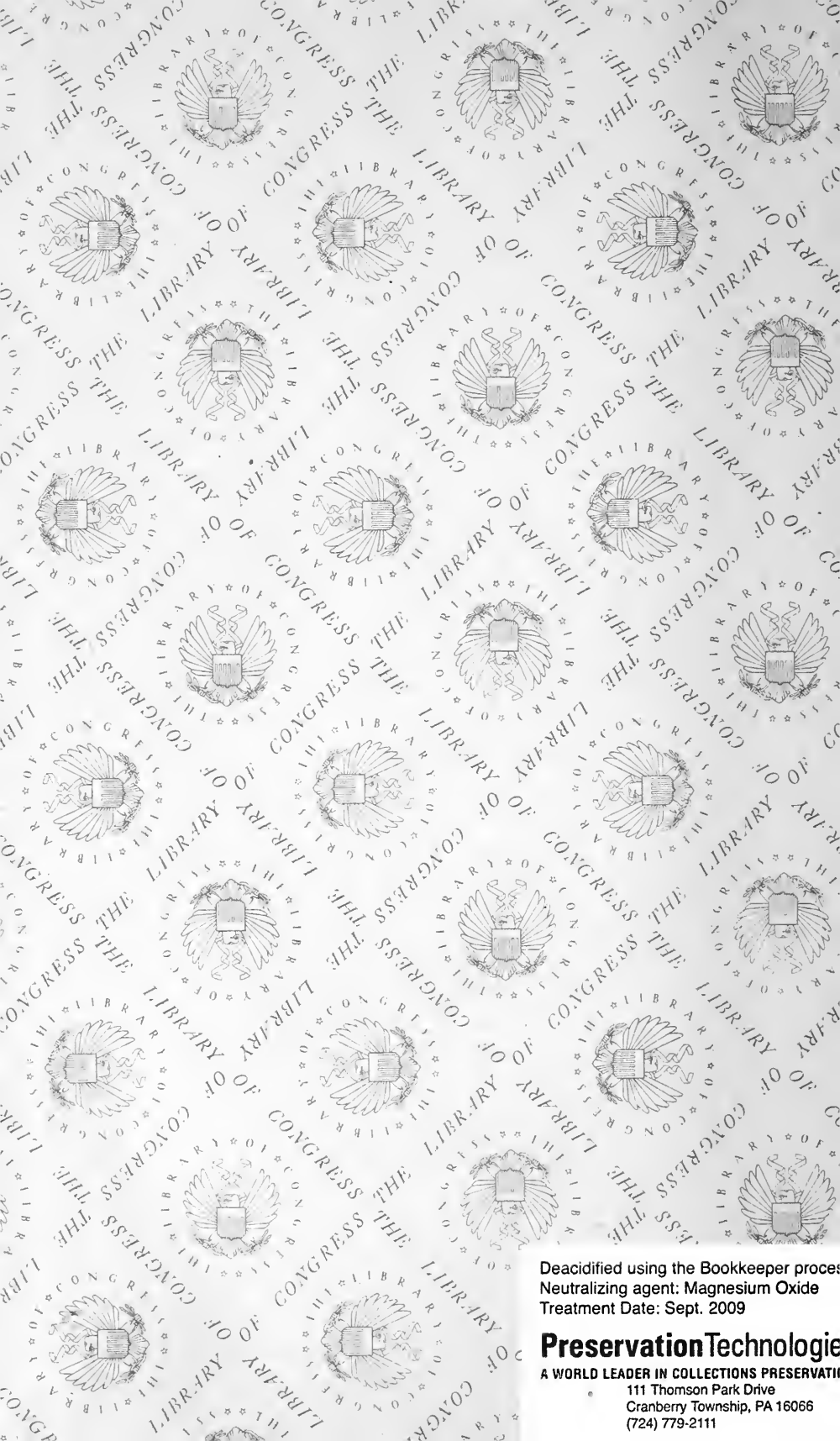
Thou Master-art of heaven! henceforth am I
The flagon-bearer of thy operant wine
Love-tinct with th' kiss of purity at the brim.
And thou, my soul! uplift like vermeil dew
In th' gladdest morntide of thy sovereign will,
Leaving no trace save on the viprous air
A freshness, and on Nature reverent still
A forward memory of all thy deeds.

Swing back, ye cavern gates! grim sentinels
Rock-browed in silence,—part! Lo, thou
sweet air

Kissing these salt-washed cheeks of all disease
And black carnality!—O Earth, and all
Thy gladdened household urgent to this cause
Wherein I may prove great to prove men
greater—

Hail ye your prophet, lo! to thy embrace
I leap from my dead cradle—a new Day,
New Nature, and new Heaven—these now are
mine,

Sworn deep into this valor-teemèd soul,
And I am gone—thus, forth—and I am gone!

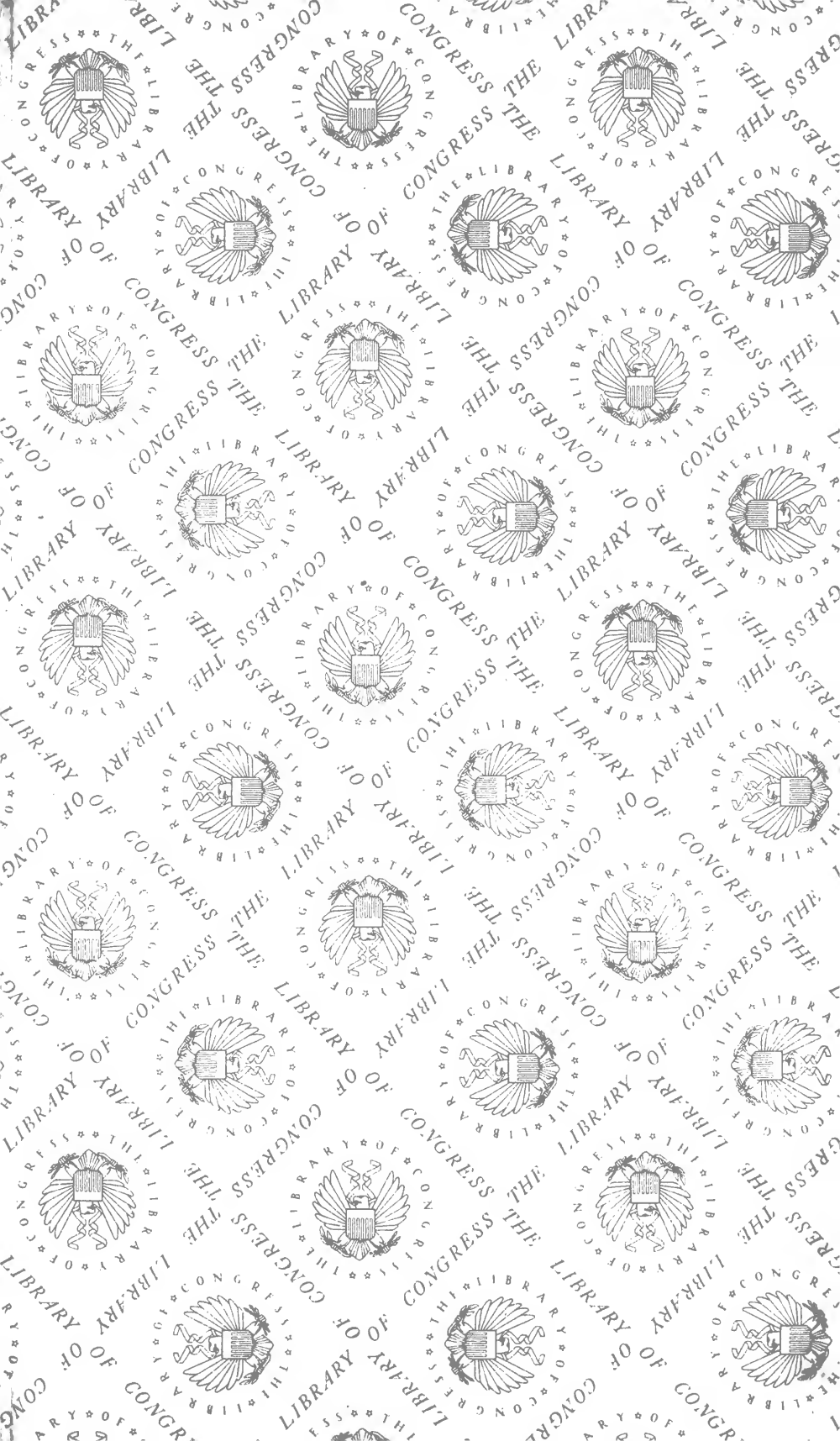


Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2009

Preservation Technologies

A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 211 447 5